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CAROLINE MATTHEWS, M.B., Ch B.



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# EXPERIENCES OF A WOMAN DOCTOR IN SERBIA

BY  
DR. CAROLINE MATTHEWS

MILLS & BOON, LIMITED  
49 RUPERT STREET  
LONDON, W.

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DEDICATED  
IN LOVE AND GRATITUDE  
TO  
AMY M. JOHNS,  
A FRIEND IN A THOUSAND

## FOREWORD

A woman child. She dream'd the dreams of men.  
Of fiery purposes, and battle's din.  
She left her dolls to play with soldier toys  
And glow'd in enterprise of heroes bold.  
Such child—  
Grown to the kingdom of her woman's heart,  
Goes forth with joy beneath her country's flag.  
Gives of her skill to those who call for aid.  
She faces death in many a cruel guise,  
Holding life cheap, for honour and her King.

A. M. JOHNS.



## PROLOGUE

“ COME over and help us ! ”

It was impossible in those days to take up a newspaper without reading the passionate appeal from brave little Serbia.

I volunteered to go out at my own expense and with my own equipment for service with the Serbian Army Field Unit. One knows the difficulties raised with regard to such work for women but it was not the first time I had worked under the Red Cross with a foreign army. My offer was gratefully accepted at the Serbian Legation in London. The Secretary, with courteous kindness, discussed almost every detail of kit and equipment.

Before I left I was asked to sign a paper—

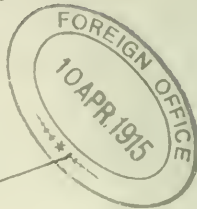
Should evil befall me in my mission, if I were killed or wounded, or if—and the possibility seemed very remote in those days—if I should be taken prisoner, the Serbian Government should be exonerated from all responsibility.





ENDORSEMENTS

Travelling to  
Serbia  
France  
Italy  
Greece



VU A LA LEGATION DE SERBIE.

Pour pour se rendre en Serbie

Londres, le 6-5-1915. D'ordre du Ministre

No. 282

Georgi V. Todorovic

Secrétaire.

Endorsement on the passport of Dr. Caroline Matthews by the Secretary of the Serbian Legation, London.



# EXPERIENCES OF A WOMAN DOCTOR IN SERBIA

*W. J. ...*

## CHAPTER I

FORTY-EIGHT members of the Scottish Women's Unit, a Civilian Engineer, a couple of Orderlies, and I—we stood on the deck of H.M. Transport *Ceramic*, strangers all, but bound together by the Cry which had found a response in each of our hearts.

A group of home folk was gathered on shore—the sisters and mothers, brothers and fathers of the doctors and nurses.

Loneliness is as we make it. The world is too full of all sorts and conditions of men for a gregarious soul to be forced into a solitary path, unless it be by his own desire. It never occurred to me that I stood there alone—that there was no one to say "Farewell." Each of us who started on that journey felt the magical comfort of a warm "God-speed." There were simple, kindly hearts on land, for dockers and Tommies felt the Bond of the Blood! They stood there together, a fine manly group. Their fellow-

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countrywomen were sailing to a foreign land, midst the perils of War, for Britain's greater glory—this they knew, and again and again their manly voices rose in cadence, infinitely touching. In many a homely phrase they sent good wishes after us and then, as the great boat slowly steamed away, there fell the hush of a strange stillness which descended on the chattering Red Cross women. Suddenly the silence was broken by the lads on shore. Grimy labourer, spruce young soldier, each unconsciously braced his shoulders while the Great Prayer of Britons sped across the Space, and then the women's shriller trebles, from the ship's deck, joined in unison. We have stood in churches and in a variety of places in honour to our King, but there was a reality never marked before in the prayer of our hearts—"Send him victorious—!"

"Your King and your country need you!"

We had heard the call, each in our several ways! We women could not give our lives for Britain in the same manner which is open to our brothers, but war brings more in its train than the carnage of the battlefields, more than the pillage and atrocities of inhuman hearts. The Angel of Death spreads forth his Right Arm and takes his toll by the aid of every mechanical contrivance suggested to man for the destruction of human life. His gaunt Left Hand smites heavily with disease, scattering

germs broadcast in the wake of armies, while Pestilence and Famine sweep clean the territory demoralised by shrapnel.

Thank God, we women can "do our bit"—beneath the Red Cross—for the Crosses of St. George, St. Andrew, St. Patrick and St. David!

The *Ceramic* was no longer the cosy ocean home of pleasure-seeking tourists. The smoke-room, the saloons on deck, told their own pitiful tale; stripped of carpets, they were filled with white-painted bunks, each one destined to carry again its quotient of suffering humanity. All useless decoration, all unnecessary hangings, everything which could form a nidus for infection, had been moved and our cabins reeked of white paint and disinfectants. We were not flying the Red Cross, we were not a hospital ship. Down in the holds we were carrying explosives and ammunition. Were we to fall foul of the Enemy it was scarcely likely quarter would be given! The officers were vigilant, alert, facing the danger of submarine craft with every precautionary measure within their power. The boats were swung out ready for immediate use. Two five-inch guns (besides which we carried maxims) at our stern were manned day and night by men of the Naval Reserve. Sometimes the position of these guns would be changed, whilst during the whole of the voyage Doctor and Purser

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were the only officers in evidence—facts which told their own tale !

We were chased by a submarine !

We knew a marconigram had been received giving warning of the under-water enemy—we knew that we were steering out of our course, keeping up full speed, due west, but it was not until we reached Malta that our suspicions were known to be certainties.

The weather clerk excelled himself. In the daytime the porpoises played and gambolled round the ship, chasing and racing each other in the glorious sunshine.

War for a few hours might seem very far away whilst the pure air of God's heaven fanned our cheeks and the firmament above was rich in the glow of Aurora's light. At times the deep blue waters reflected the tiny fluffy cloudlets and in the Beauty of Space there was apparent Peace.

But out on the Seas Highway, again and again, we were brought to realise the Menace to the World. Now a German wireless message would be intercepted, now the gaunt hulk of a British or French cruiser would bear down on us—silent testimony of a ceaseless watch—a proof of our supremacy upon the seas.

We arrived at Malta one evening just as the sun was setting. The " married quarters " of the Barracks—the Camerata—opposite the Military Hospital—were placed at our disposal by the



Admiralty. Each flat consisted of two rooms, small kitchen, convenience, and was provided with certain cupboards, chairs, saucepans and things which a paternal government considers essential for the welfare of Tommy's family.

Until the Great Upheaval, until Europe's War stirred the heart of the Empire, the majority of the Scottish Women had been guarded by a kindly Fate within the confines of the British Isles, and to these home-bred lasses the sight of those flats was a revelation.

"Roughing it" is a comparative term dependent upon the adventurous spirit of the individual. Besides, it makes a very great difference whether the "roughing it" be undertaken by one's own free will and choice, or enforced by circumstances beyond one's control. Many of the Unit were to learn this lesson before ever again they were to see the shores of England.

Each room was a wilderness, howling aloud for the attention of some domestically inclined brawny arm. The mattresses had the appearance of having seen much service with all sorts and conditions of troopers. The sheets were clean and newly washed, more or less damp. About the room and on the dark brown, be-arrowed blankets was spread a quantity of Naphthalin. The Officer who assigned us our quarters assured me with most courteous gravity that we need have no fear of pediculi.

“But from bugs—well, doctor, I cannot promise absolute immunity”; then his look of concern gave place to hope, to encouragement, and he added, “But even if you are bitten, after all it will not be dangerous!”

There did not seem a great deal to cheer one in his words! The idea of providing entertainment for either of these pests is sufficiently unpleasant to outweigh the consideration that the one is a Typhus carrier and the other is not. We might think gladly of this fact later, but at the time the mere fact of the presence of vermin is quite enough to tackle.

Those of us who were old campaigners were wise after our generation. We drew the bedsteads from the walls, piled the great Army rugs into the furthestmost possible corner of the room, and slept in the sheets with coats and skirts above us and piles of Keating’s powder scattered with the Naphthalin on mattresses and floor.

In that part of Malta one is awakened at dawn and it is impossible for the most fatigued to court sleep after the sun has risen in the heavens. Pandemonium reigns. Chaos arises from the peace which envelops the night. Church bells vie with each other in clashing their loudest, and surely never in any town of any Isle are there so many churches with so many bells quite so close together. Street vendors ply their wares, their raucous voices in mongrel dialect rise

above the din. In all the world there is no place quite like Malta with its touch of the East—like the faint aroma of some far-distant perfume—and withal the fact of its essential Britishness. With the cling-clang of numerous bells flocks of goats pass up and down the streets, herd meeting herd, mingling together, until it seems impossible to the uninitiated that the animals can ever sort themselves into their original groups. Every now and then the lad in charge picks out a beast and, squatting on his haunches, supplies the housewife at her door.

The Government take stringent precautions against the scourge of Mediterranean Fever. Certain rules are posted in the Camerata, a copy in every flat :

No goats' milk may be purchased by His Majesty's troops. Each member of the family must wash their hands before meals in a solution of Potassium Permanganate. There are certain rules concerning the family larder. All drinking water must be boiled,—a fresh supply each day. All meat kept overnight must be re-cooked and eaten hot. Vegetables and fruit must always be boiled.

One night of the Camerata was sufficient for the two men of the *Ceramic* party. The next morning they migrated, but even at the Hotel they chose they did not find conditions much improved—if we were to judge from their tales

of woe! Perhaps they enjoyed paying the accounts presented by the proprietor instead of being guests of the Admiralty. For my own part had I had the choice of all the places in the Island none could have pleased me better than those assigned to us. There were drawbacks, certainly, but one great fact far outweighed such small considerations. . . .

When the members of the Scottish Women's Unit lay behind locked doors and the ancient Hospice was bathed in the stillness of the night, some invisible hand seemed to draw me from my quarters and I would walk the worn flags of the corridors, pace the piazzas in the moonlight, and pass up and down the great stone steps.

Peace reigned, the world of Malta slumbered in the bosom of the Night—but old Melitus lived!

The shades of the Crusaders visited their earthly habitation. The moon rose, filling all the world with beautiful soft radiance, the new doors were closed and the quiet breathing of the sleeping suffragettes failed to break the stillness. A rat scurried across the courtyard into the further shade. Many were the noiseless footsteps round me. Many the voiceless "I remembers," breathed with no necessity of uttered sound. Silence reigned.

A light quick step is heard. A mortal, this, who falls into line with an old Crusader. The

invulnerable veil of mortality is drawn across her eyes but her spirit is in touch with the Spirit of the Past, and is linked by Understanding across the Sea of Time. . . .

I could not see the forms around me, but the blind can picture the features of their friends with amazing accuracy—so intuitive is real sympathy. . . .

On Sunday I attended service at the old Church of St. John. We knelt above the human remains of those stout hearts which faced the rigours of the Crusades. They lay at my feet, those men, their trial over,—men who once had had our hopes, endeavours, passions. Those who failed, those who won, those accepted by the world as saintly, those condemned by man. Perhaps of these latter, some found the palm branch waiting at the Veiled Gate, whilst the honoured and renowned could not pass within. They bore the Master's symbol, bore it nobly and well—the white cross on the red ground.—Inexplicably my attention was drawn to the badge on my arm. . . .

The Red Cross on its white ground !

A time was to come when this indescribable influence, which at the moment set me dreaming of what might be, was to play a very real part in strengthening courage weakened by the strain of physical needs.



## CHAPTER II

THE Scottish Women's Unit was commandeered by Lord Methuen, the Governor of Malta. The wounded from the Dardanelles were pouring in and nurses were at a premium. The khaki-clad trio—that is the Civil Engineer, the Orderly and I—proceeded by a Messageries Maritimes liner. The contrast between the precautions taken on board the English transport and the lack of any apparent measure on the French ship was markedly evident. The boats were all tucked up and snug, the davits looked as if they would require some handling in case of emergency. In the evenings the decks were bright with the usual lights. Many of the passengers were Russian, some French, others Greek and Italian, the great majority were women and children. The First Officer stood by the rails with his inevitable cigarette and discussed the situation.

To take the same precautions as were deemed necessary on board the British boat would be to create a terrible panic among the passengers. "Besides," he added, with a shrug of his shoulders, "probably nothing will happen!"

We spent two days at Piræus—a treat to those



sans frais

ENDORSEMENTS

M à la Légation de Grèce  
Bon pour se rendre en Grèce  
Londres le 4/7 Avril 1915

Le Ministre de Grèce

*[Signature]*

Български консул  
12/4 1915  
София  
*[Signature]*



Greek and Bulgarian endorsements on passport.



who saw the land of the Athenian for the first time. Early in the morning I landed with a Belgian Sister, revelling in the history of the past. Midday came and we lunched in the town at a pleasant little restaurant. By the time basins of delicious sheep's milk were placed before us we were on terms of good comradeship with a couple of officers at a neighbouring table. We had all seen active service. These new friends had fought in the Balkan War and this was a link between us. According to their account, we women represented nations with whom were all their sympathies. French was the *vade mecum* to acquaintance.

"Three weeks and we will be with you," said Captain —, a typical Greek, whose well-cut features betrayed the fact that he was one who had been in the front of Life's battle and had received the world's hard blows.

Now, all these months later, time has proved the part that Greece has taken in the European crisis, but in May, 1915, those two officers voiced the popular opinion. We heard almost the identical words again and again, from soldiers and sailors, and several civilians.

"All the country awaits the new elections. If the king hesitates we will force him to step aside," the people told us.

A young lady overheard one of our attempts to make a passer-by understand and direct us

on our way. She came up and with easy Southern grace offered the needed explanation. She had none of the insipid prettiness of an English girl. She was a beautiful woman with features delicately chiselled. One could well imagine that she might have stood as model to one of the ancient masters. Her eyes flashed, her lips were firmly set when she spoke of Germany.

"We love the English," she said, "we are with you!" . . .

It was Saint George's Day and we entered the Church of the Patron Saint—as we came out the little lady begged our names and addresses and saw us on our way.

That evening I went into a shop to make necessary purchases. The proprietor of the stores took great pains to match some buttons, but when it came to paying the bill (a few odd shillings) his manner and tone were deferential:

"You are English," he said, "there is nothing to pay"—and then he repeated the words we had heard so often, "We will soon be with you!"

The same thing happened at a chemist's—the purchases were given into our hands with the explanation, "No, we cannot take your money. You are English, you are doing a great work!"

In the streets, in the shops the men saluted us. I only heard one dissentient voice. In the train

from Piræus we were speaking somewhat freely, not for a moment thinking we were understood by our third-class companions. A man on my right suddenly addressed me in facile English. Without knowing why, I felt the change of atmosphere—in spite of his beaming smile.

“You are not a Greek,” I stated with conviction. He had been talking to my companion, now he turned to me and claimed to be Italian with a rough Calabrian accent. The man was persuasively friendly. He claimed to have fought with us during the Boer War—but as he made the statement a peculiar expression gleamed for the fraction of a second—a look which faded from his eyes almost as soon as it flashed from his mind.

For once I read correctly.

“In spite of your words you are no friend to us,” I said distinctly. After a moment I leant over :

“You were with de Wet, we know your sort—  
MADE IN GERMANY ! ”

The mask fell. A stream of abuse followed, only half intelligible, and in accents which brought vividly to mind memories of past days among the unrestful people of Calabria.

Very different was the tall young soldier by whose side we stood a moment.

“Isn’t he a splendid chap,” I said to my friend. “He makes me feel a very little atom ! ”

To our amusement the lad saluted.

“Mademoiselle, I know you make fun of my height. But it will make a good target in the battlefield ! ”

I assured him we appreciate such physique in England. He smiled. “Shortly you will see, Mademoiselle,—we will be fighting by your side ! ”

Then he saw us into our train ; and the last glimpse we had of ancient Athens was that tall young officer saluting us with a very friendly smile. He must have felt the long of it—I certainly had felt the short of it, as we walked along the street.

Now our knowledge of Greek was *nil*, and before leaving Piræus we wanted to buy some fruit for our friends on board. We stopped at a shop up a little side street in the seaport town . . . by no means an aristocratic quarter. French, German, and Italian proved equally inadequate. A crowd collected, the men were determined to help us. At last a sailor was pushed in front of his fellows. Yes, he knew a few words of Italian. The business settled, he took our purchases. Tell us our way ? Not he, but he would act as our escort and then, with the swift, generous courtesy of the Southerner, he walked on a few steps ahead. As we embarked in a rowing boat he stood at the water's edge, cap in hand, to wish us “God speed.”

The contemptible habit of using a fiacre at every turn does not appeal to the really enquiring mind. Pacing the streets one learns to know one's fellow-man. We asked our way to the Musée. Several gentlemen as they passed tried to assist, one stopping the other and making voluble explanations. If the Athenians of to-day inherit their ancestors' spirit and rejoice in seeing and learning new things, then they should, like our fellow Islanders, learn first the value of strange tongues.

Neither French nor Italian helped us, and nobody suggested the language of the Fatherland. Suddenly we heard right good English words, and soon we were chatting like lifelong friends with a typical upper-class Greek. Our acquaintance was a doctor, he had studied in "Auld Reekie." Strangers? Did we not both claim the old Alma Mater? The overshadowing power of the old 'Varsity reaches to the earth's very confines and when her children meet on far-distant paths she draws them together in the invisible, inexplicable bond of brotherhood. "Soon to be brothers in arms!" cried the surgeon. Exchanging names, we smiled. Matro the Belge, Matris the Greek, and Matthews the Britisher!

Another quaint incident occurred while we were still in Athens. I was walking in the clouds; Phædo, Crito, Critobuleus and the Great Master being more real than the passers-by, whilst the



characters of Raphael's School of Athens peopled their old haunts. The modern street had faded from my view, I was pacing a path which ran by the edge of a stream, by the side of a man whose well-worn tunic might have been regal purple, so dignified his mien, so filled with power the face which lacked all symmetry of feature. . . .

My reverie was broken by the voice of the Belge ; she was making enquiries with regard to our tram and a stranger woman had voluntarily come to our assistance.

"Are you French ?" we asked, for she spoke the language with precision and wonderful facility.

"Mais non," cried the lady, shutting her mouth like a rat-trap.

The Belge was not observant, she hoped to find a compatriot. The stranger evidently did not wish to claim her nationality—well, it was no business of mine ! I changed the subject, and for a few minutes we spoke of other matters, then our weird companion gave us a tremendous surprise.

"Ich bin Deutsche," she said, without preamble, in a low, frightened voice.

Now we had not accosted this person, she had come to us of her own free will, nor had we felt "sympatica," and it was she who persisted in walking by our side.

The Belge was nonplussed for the moment.

It was not as if the woman's statement with regard to her nationality had been given as a simple fact, she hung her head, her whole appearance suggested shame.

The Southerner is to be envied who, by very nature of his temperament, is able to extract himself from a *mauvais pas*, or kindred difficulty, with that ready, facile courtesy unfamiliar to the rougher Northern character.

But for once I rose to the occasion.

I spoke, impelled by a desire for civility, not certainly by veracity.

"I have many German friends, Madame. This war is hard on women. We suffer greatly."

I had spoken in my natural tone. We British have not learnt to dread free speech.

"Pray be careful," whispered the German lady, "do not speak aloud."

Her hands were trembling, she looked a pitiable creature. The amazed Belge bade her not to be afraid, no one would hurt her! The assurance only served to make the woman more nervous, more pitiable. Was she possessed by some imaginary phantasy? Her hunted look, her furtive glances round attracted some attention among the passers-by. She looked guilty, but of what? "Spy," whispered the Belge in my ear—but the Kaiser's servants do not suffer from excessive self-consciousness.

We stopped by the tramway station. The

stranger was professedly a German subject, but she had come to our assistance—and we were both in uniform, British and Belge, obviously enemies of her country. Because of this I held out my hand at parting. Very rudely she turned on me. She did not speak, but her face and manner were more eloquent than any words! It is not, as a rule, given to crustacean, insular British to act with ready *savoir-faire*. Some good angel prompted me that day.

“Madame,” I said, still frankly extending my hand, “we British do not make war on women and children, we deal only with your men. . . . Besides, I work for humanity,” and I pointed to the symbol on my arm.

Our strange acquaintance abruptly turned her back and swiftly walked away, leaving us both standing in the road gazing after her retreating figure, lost in sheer amazement.

“Mais comme elle est drôle,” laughed the Belgian Sister at last.

Cook’s office is opposite the tramway station at Athens. We looked at it and we looked at each other. Much knocking about the world along unbeaten tracks leaves one shy of tourists and their agents—even the best—but we wanted money changed and this time at least the old familiar sign was hailed with joy.

There was the latest news of the war to be learned, and as we came down the steps we were



chatting of the countries so dear to our hearts, and of the battlefields in Flanders.

“Madame, come, come for a minute I pray you”; we started at the sound of the voice, for the moment the German lady had not been in our thoughts—but there she was again like some uncanny spectre. As we stood irresolute she seized the Sister’s arm with a shaking hand and drew her a step apart—not so far but that I could hear their conversation.

“Madame, I have done something for you,” cried the Hun woman, in a plaintive falsetto voice, “I came to direct you on your way—and you—will you do a little thing for me?—If that English creature ever comes across wounded German soldiers will you prevent her practising those cruelties her people always love to commit upon the helpless? Save our poor men, for humanity’s sake, from ever falling into her hands.”

Then the Belge let out. She was no longer the same woman. Insane or sane the German had said too much. Recollections of gallant little Belgium’s suffering stirred the Sister’s blood. Scene after scene of cruel crime, heartless brutality, many an unspeakable Frightfulness committed in the name of Kultur before her very eyes, lay bared in memory and—her country’s wrongs were her wrongs.

“I’d love to treat your Kaiser as your men

have treated us. . . . If I tortured him by inches—if I cooked and roasted him it would be a thousand times too good. . . . Your German soldiers—wait till I see some—make them suffer? As they've made others? . . . If your wounded fall into my hands. . . .”

As I have said the Belgian was roused—her tongue ran away with her, she could not speak quickly enough. . . .

It was with difficulty I drew her away.

We left the German lady standing by Cook's office, looking more scared, more woebegone—if that were possible—than even when she first had tackled us.

### CHAPTER III

SITTING by our cosy English firesides we read all about the bombardment of Belgrade, but how many of us grasped what it really meant—especially in those earlier days of the gigantic struggle ?

We read of war, read of it in the beauty of Britain's Peace, with Nature's gifts scattered richly round us, and on every side the luxury contrived by a prosperous people.

We know to-day that all we hold most dear is hanging in the balance, we are giving our sons and fathers that they may die and suffer for the cause of Right and Freedom, and although we know that it is War—War to the bitter end, yet the realization of what it really means is not within our grasp !

Thank God, our country lanes have not yet heard the squeal of man as cold steel enters his quivering flesh. The rocks have not re-echoed to the thundering of the guns, and the crack of rifles. Britain's fields have not been swamped with human blood, nor have her hill-sides embraced stiff, inert figures of her sons, their white drawn faces turned towards the sky ! We cannot fully realize what we have not known—

but our hearts are wrung with pity for our friends to whom the pandemonium of war, at their very doors, was and is a reality stern and awful. Yes, we read all about the war which raged in Serbia—we have read and heard of more since then. We are becoming war-wise and the significance of the words—"The Government has moved to Nish"—was not lost upon us. But the term "Second Capital" portrayed to our fancy the shops and people of an ordinary European street. As we discovered on our arrival imagination plays grotesque pranks with reality! Streets and shops and people? Yes, they were all there, but of a kind, quality, and quantity which we by no means associate with a country's second largest city.

An English carriage would have soon been knocked to pieces on the roads at Nish. The public vehicle which plied for hire was a type of small springless victoria generally drawn by a pair of weedy horses. To venture on a drive was to enter adventure in itself. At every step the carriage might plunge into great uneven holes, filled with mud and slush—unless the sun's rays had baked it into clay. The cobble stones were large and woefully uneven—it was not a town for dainty shoes, high heels, and bewitching little feet. The small, narrow-shaped bullock carts were eminently fitted as carriers of farm produce or merchandise under such conditions.

The Serbians, with the aid of the British and the Allies, made brave attempts to stem the tide of Typhus. We found that the cafés and public refreshment places were closed by law for certain hours a day, during such intervals the cleansing of the rooms being made imperative. This order was strongly enforced although the method of cleansing left much to be desired to Western minds. Only those who have travelled in the Near East can realize what a "café" means in the Balkans. They are in every street, and with all their drawbacks are a thousand times more wholesome—from one point of view—than our British "Pubs."

Customers with their glass of wine—red or white—sitting at the little tables in the street, hail their friends and talk awhile. Peasants coming in from the surrounding villages stop for a cup of excellent coffee, and to hear the latest news and discuss the interests of the day. "Rakiya" is taken in a tiny measure—it is the native spirit distilled from plums, fiery and strong with a peculiar taste that would require practice for appreciation.

Cleanliness in the culinary art is surely a matter of paramount importance to a fastidious person. But one must eat and drink to keep fit, and in the Balkan States, as in many another country, it is better to do so without a question. It is very well to shun uncooked vegetables and



fruit, and unboiled water—that is, when it is possible to do so. The time came when one was too glad to obtain any water to question its source. Sometimes one would see a great Serbian officer disinfect his bread with burning spirit—a wise precaution doubtless enough, but when one considers the sanitary conditions of the town, and the extraordinary prevalence of vermin, it seemed utterly inadequate to set a guard at one gate only. When dangers lie on every hand it is perfectly useless playing the ostrich—“whatever is to be, is written on the forehead”—in hopping out of one danger zone as we see the shell descending, we may run blindly into the path of another life-smashing contrivance. When fever and pestilence are raging round, stem the tide by every available method, use every possible means to prevent the spread, and exert to the utmost every faculty to minimise the public peril, but having done all within human power, in the conditions presented to us,—then rest content. Hundreds of others are breathing the same atmosphere, others are exposed to the same evil. Walk along with calm mien, looking at the situation with that fearlessness which is our great heritage. The heart that falters is the one which lays his body exposed to the flying shafts of fever. A possibility premeditated materializes into stern reality.

The first thing that struck me at Nish was the

number of prisoners of war. There were hosts of Austrians about, gangs were working on the railway, one saw them mending the roads, and even driving bullock carts in from the country where certain of the men were portioned out to help the farmers. The hospitals were full of prisoners—patients, doctors, and attendants. Everywhere one saw the light blue uniform. Moreover, these men looked happy and well. They worked cheerily, they went about their business with light-hearted countenance. One of the most extraordinary pictures which memories of those days conjure forth is the vivid contrast that there was between the conqueror and prisoner.

By nature the Serb is far from being morose. Those years of oppression beneath the Crescent would have crushed all hope out of a less resilient, happy nature.

For four hundred years, under brutalities unspeakable, under indignities inconceivable, there burnt a flame of poetry and the spark which animates all joyous feeling. With all their faults we must admire the Serb when we realize how love of country lived during those dark centuries beneath a master's tyrannical power, lived in spite of circumstances seemingly so hopeless—with the deliverance of their beloved land hidden in an unknown future. This past strain, added to the present, made a grievous burden, and

while his prisoner bore a smiling face the Serbs showed traces of the wear of four years' ceaseless warfare. Maybe a foreboding of the future, of their fair country trampled once again under the foot of the Conqueror, played an unconscious part in the development of that unmistakably sad expression.

The Austrians on their persons still bore visible traces of the wear and tear of battle. Uniforms which had seen service on the fields were cut by sabre or shrapnel, covering the scars of wounds. In nearly every case the clothes worn when taken prisoner are a man's sole asset.

Servants of the Dual Monarchy, many of the men I saw at Nish were Slav by birth, by love and hope. Many thousands of Bohemians and Moravians preferred death to dishonour. These heroes refused to fight against their brother Slav, refused to obey the call to arms, refused to answer to the call which ordered their people to support the force of Might, in their would-be vengeance on the adherents of Freedom and Justice. And these Czech lads were shot by the exponents of Kultur—shot by the score.

Their countrymen who fell into the hands of the Serb were content that it was so. In hospital and without they did their duty manfully. Food was not plentiful, but these men did not grumble.

"Our rations are the same as the Serbian soldier," they said to me. "There might be



more and it might be better but it is the best they've got to give."

But there are hardships in Serbia for prisoners of war which it is difficult to realize in England. Great Britain is a prosperous Island and with her generous heart she wraps her fallen foe in the lap of luxury. Some of us may criticize our methods but there is something fine in such treatment of an enemy, to whom the meaning of generosity is unknown. After all, it is the outcome of the teaching of our public schools—and in spite of all that we may say, we, as a nation, would not wish to be less chivalrous, we women would not have our men less manly. Serbia was war-stained, a little nation just awakening from a fiendish grip which would have throttled the spirit of a less hardy people. The prisoners were quartered and roughed it under the same conditions as a Serbian warrior. He had his straw as a rule—he had his soup, he had his portion of black bread. The lot of a gentleman ranker is not enviable as prisoner of war. The clothes of a young doctor of law were literally threadbare. Extraordinary patches and various attempts at mending—as understood by the masculine turn of mind—showed a natural fastidiousness but at the same time gave rather a quaint effect. However, work and plain though ample fare (luckily for the lad he was attached to a military hospital) had agreed with

him and he was a picture of rare health. A doctor, who in peace time is a specialist in Diseases of Children, was then physician to an internment camp. He was a very dapper little man and, in spite of all difficulties, always contrived to have an appearance particularly *comme il faut*. With money sent from his friends he had a new uniform made at Nish near enough to Austrian colour, and the soldierly, trim little figure stood out in contrast to his war-worn and torn brothers-in-arms. He had lost his sword the first day in an engagement.

“And it was very lucky—I was glad to get rid of it—I didn’t look for it,” he told me with a smile.

Many of the prisoners, both officers and men, told me that they had never fired a shot.

The moral ?

Men who are made to serve beneath the strong hand of an alien can be forced into the ranks but their hearts are their own and when no spontaneous call of duty has stirred them to the effort they are better left at home.

Mortality from Typhus, as all the world knows, had been unparalleled in Serbia, but at the time of our arrival the scourge had lessened its grip on the land, the united efforts of the Allies had stemmed the course of its tide.

The 2nd Reserve Military Hospital at Nish gave hospitality to many Red Cross Workers

from Allied Countries. It was Head-quarters on arrival, it was the refuge of the traveller. Later, a Rest House was opened for British workers where board and bed could be obtained at a reasonable charge. Hotels, such as they are in the Balkans, were generally full—they had their complement of officers and men.

The C.M.O., a genial courteous Serb, was the right man in the right place. The food was good and plentiful. One large table ran the length of the dining-room, with others at either end which were used when required by an extra inflow of guests. Sheets played the parts of tablecloths and they could have been cleaner. In the mornings there were great basins of boiling milk, large jugs of fragrant coffee, and brown cakes of palatable bread. We used thick white cups without saucers and the majority of men and women present would place their wet spoons straight upon the table.

At supper we would sit down the most cosmopolitan party, officers, nurses and medical men and women. Serb, French, Russian, Brazilian, Greek, a couple of Czech doctors (one a prisoner who had escaped from Bohemia), an Austrian prisoner, and then there was a retired R.A.M.C. Captain (an Anglo-Indian), who sat next to me and with whom I had travelled from Salonika.

The languages spoken were as varied in tone as in quality and kind. Occasionally we were

given a treat. After coffee a young Czech doctor (a prisoner) would produce a violin and silence would reign. He was past-master of his Art, and his instrument would vibrate to the passionate cry of the exiled heart. He pictured the scenes which stained his memory—scenes of fields of blood, the death shrieks of his comrades, and then the notes would trail into a touching prayer of thankfulness, to the glory of the Reigning Spirit, which had led him from the fierce cruelties of war to be sheltered by a kindly foe, away from the unspeakable horrors which had torn his very soul.

It was a touching sight to see the lad as he stood with his instrument in hand, his blue eyes gazing into space, seeing far beyond that great bare, whitewashed room. His uniform was torn and battle-stained—ripped open where he had been wounded on the arm—and rents were held together by man-made, ill-assorted stitches.

He would stand there—holding captive the hearts of those who held him prisoner. He could play upon our feelings, and was for the nonce our master, as he led us away from the horrors of war and the filth and the poverty of our courageous little Ally.

It was a most interesting sight to visit the Privilista (room for dressings) at the 2nd Reserve.

About eight o'clock in the morning Austrian prisoners brought the patients down from the

wards on stretchers. It was a large room some fifty feet long with tables placed down the centre for the reception of the wounded.

When work was in full swing one saw the cruel side of warfare. It was a picture with nothing to relieve its intense ugliness. Nothing did I say? Nothing apparent perhaps at the first moment of entrance, but in a few minutes' time one grasped the scene in all its fulness and realized that the atmosphere was rendered beautiful by the wondrous fortitude, and the uncomplaining, noble courage of those shattered Serbian soldiers.

Orderlies, Serbian and Austrian, removed dressings, as at each table a surgeon examined the injured limb. Here were exposed huge gaping wounds in the quivering flesh, there a leg lay bared with muscles and vessels veritably dissected out from knee to ankle—the stench abominable—(a case of post-typhus gangrene). The less-severely wounded, seated on forms round the room, were dressed at the selfsame time.

There were things done in that room *without an anæsthetic* which one could never see in England. Serbia's greatest enemy cannot truthfully ignore the fact that they are an extraordinarily courageous people. It was rarely one heard a groan, I have seen more than one man biting his teeth on a folded bandage, sweat



pouring from his forehead with intensity of suffering—but the moment his *mauvais quart d'heure* is past a smile is on his lips, and if it is belied by the look of cruel pain, wrung from tell-tale eyes, all the more did one feel real reverence for such unselfish heroism.

Human suffering sanctified that place, and entering one was constrained to step softly, wondering the while at such marvellous people.

At Nish I received one of the surprises of my life. At the Serbian Legation, in London, I had been accepted for work under the Red Cross in the dressing-stations at the actual front—with the Serbian Field Army Unit. I had been sent out by the courtesy of the British Admiralty—certainly not expecting the reception received at Nish.

At the War Office I was told that no woman would be accepted for such work. I urged that my services had already been accepted by his Excellency, the Serbian Ambassador.

The reply amazed me.

“They have exceeded their orders at the Legation,” I was told by an official.

“If one of our Ambassadors,” I reasoned with them, “passes his official word, it is Britain’s word and Britain’s word stands good.”

Such arguments were seemingly of no avail.

Finally I was sent to a large military hospital at Skopyc.

Later, having the opportunity of being attached to a unit, under canvas, I worked among the civilian population and learnt, during the long quiet summer, more of the inner life of these people and became better acquainted with their likeness and unlikeness to the Western nations.

## CHAPTER IV

VALJEVO is situated in one of the most beautiful parts of Serbia. During the long summer evenings of 1915 the sun went gloriously to bed, shedding a marvellous radiance over all the earth, throwing into deep relief the outline of the hills and radiating with celestial beauty in deep tones of crimson, ruby, and many bright, golden yellows far across the heavens. In the autumn great juicy blackberries ripened in wild profusion, plums hung overhead and fields of maize were seen on every side.

The streets of the little town are fairly broad, and good bridges span the river. In the early morning at the water's side the peasants coming in fresh from the country offered their wares for sale—it was the Market. The cattle market was held immediately across the river. On the days when there were fairs it was well to stop by the bridge and add one's mite to the little pile of coins in front of Serbia's historian—the Gusler player. The instrument is very primitive, something like a guitar with a single string. The Serbs are essentially a poetical folk, and for centuries the raconteurs of the brave deeds of



Kraleovitch Marko—the great national hero—have been welcome at every gathering, in every house, in every hut, throughout the land. There never has been a written history—yet the Nation's story is fuller and more in detail than that of many a country with parchment and book to command. The wandering minstrel passed from village to village, chanting the deeds of their heroes, the valour of their soldiers. The mother sang the poems to her babe, the youth hummed them as he tilled the ground—till the history of the nation was indelibly written on the hearts of the people.

On the little bridge, by which we entered the village on our way from camp, stood an old peasant sentry—all along the railway lines one saw such guards, one saw similar shelters, too, such as this man had—a few sticks, a little tarpaulin, a few sacks—anything to act as buffer against the wind or cold at night. The Balkan folk are adepts at making shelters with the leafy branches of trees intertwined.

Sometimes I would tramp into the village, down the hill-side—often enough beneath a broiling sun—across the little bridge, with a word to the sentry, down past the Church and bearing to the left round by the “Grand Hotel,” into a quaint little shop, low-roofed and cool.

The soldiers and peasants who patronized the tiny place soon became good comrades, and we

would chatter over our great platters of soured milk and share the proprietor's pride in the drawings which his soldier son had made at school—wonderful they seemed to the illiterate old man and wonderful they were indeed.

Along the roadsides and in the hills one came across many a cemetery. Alas, pestilence and war had added so great a number to God's Acres that many an extra field shows its harvest of small wooden crosses—a harvest of men who had passed beyond in the turmoil of battle or gripped by the hand of fever. Whichever the route, these heroes took the journey PRO PATRIA.

They were in rows, those small wooden crosses—hundreds and hundreds—many to an "Unknown Soldier." Somewhere weary hearts were longing for the face that they would never see.

The farmer ploughed around the new field which bore its human harvest. No line, no fences stretched in demarcation. By now, perhaps, the furrow of the plough extends to where the bones of the Brave lie rotting.

Serbia lives on her pigs. Their great, unwieldy hideous forms were everywhere. After the great Austrian set-back, these animals fed on the tremendous army of dead—friend and foe. There was no time to bury so great a number at a wholesome depth. Rambling in a cemetery on a hill-side overlooking Valjevo, one summer evening, I came across a dog crunching

a human bone. I took that Fibula, and then was face to face with the problem of what to do with it. Finally I took it back to my tent.

There is something peculiarly pathetic in the number of headstones bearing the likeness of Serbia's sons. The uniformed lads looked at us, happy and proud, dreams of great deeds, heroic and unselfish, transfiguring their faces, their sweethearts' kisses fresh upon their lips—we saw the Slav man thus. Hard it was indeed to realize that those that day so keen, so full of life, lay beneath our feet—from Dust, to Dust returned.

At Nish during the Typhus Epidemic the doctors of the Army of the Dual Monarchy struggled with their Serbian compeers to stem the tide of devastation. They worked heroically and fell at their posts. Deaths most glorious. They gave their lives for the sick in an enemy's country. They had started out in all the bitterness of Enmity. They died for the symbol of the Cross beneath which they did their life-work.

The Serbians are grateful. Two little granite crosses mark their resting-place. The cemetery is wild and overgrown with wild flowers, oxen stray about. Some old tombstones are almost hidden by the luxurious advancement of rich vegetation. Like so many others, this Acre of God's Land had proved too small for the havoc of these days.

Dr. Bubel was not forgotten. The Serbs are

not vindictive. Flowers lay upon his grave, plucked by some loving heart either Austrian or Slav—maybe it was in grateful remembrance.

It was a beautiful spot. There was silence save for the hum of insects and the lowing of cattle. Far away the hills rise to the sky, some with their snowclad heights hidden in the clouds. There was peace. Those which lay beneath our feet had done with the toil and pain of life. Suddenly the notes of a bugle rang through the air !

It was War, not Peace, and its hazards and its meaning were brought to our consciousness by very contrast.

One saw strange things on the graves of the newly dead in Serbia. Books, money, plums, bread and water, sometimes a small fire, or the ashes of one which had been. I asked many people for an explanation. The majority did not know or would not tell the reason why, and from others I learnt completely contradictory facts. Some claimed the symbolical significance, others declared that it was a custom in aid of the poor who thus knew where to find money and food. Others again solemnly averred that the articles were placed there for their friend's sustenance during his journey through the Infinite to the final Valhalla.

Our Tommies can keep more or less in touch with their friends, but postal arrangements in

Serbia, especially in war-time, are not the same as in the West, and, besides, even if they were, a large majority of peasants cannot read or write. A man might be away in the wars for many years without being able to communicate with his wife.

It is impossible not to appreciate the Serbian soldier. His grit, his pluck, his wonderful courage and power of endurance are equalled by few. They are a fine set of fellows, these Slavs, with their splendid physique and rugged, brown, wholesome faces. Among the regiments I saw, there was none of that spick-and-spanness so distinctive of our Army. The men were often in rags and tatters with little enough of uniform left, many were clad in peasants' dress with soldiers' cap. Some had boots but most had well-worn sandals. In spite of their outside appearance, in spite of their dilapidated garments, these men were every inch soldiers—and fine ones at that.

The Serbian people have their obvious faults. They are faults which are glaringly perceptible. After so many centuries beneath the dominant Crescent, how can we be surprised that their dictionary did not contain the equivalent to *parole d'honneur*? They are not a treacherous people—far from it, but they cannot speak the truth. They are anxious to please their friends and in their anxiety will state as a definite fact that which they desire to be.



The Turkish yoke brought the influence of Islam into play, and Islam and Christianity are better far apart. Each is good of its kind, but they cannot amalgamate. The habit of Truth requires Freedom for its growth, it is banished on the precincts of Fear and Slavery.

See a regiment start for the front. The men often carried a bundle of bread and onions put up in a handkerchief by sweetheart and wife. The troop trains were garlanded with flowers and branches of trees, they dance the kola at the stopping-places, footing it gaily to the gypsy's fiddle, for these great fellows have in their hearts that which Rockefeller, with all his riches, cannot buy.

It is the Spirit of a country which is Young. It is the Spirit of Immortality.

Now, for the moment, Serbia is crushed beneath the heel of Europe's enemy. Crushed but not dead! She has a vitality all her own. She was not submerged in the past, not with all the pressure brought to bear upon her by alien masters—alien in religion, in thought and in deed—and she will rise again in the future to a glorious destiny, a wonderful Life. . . .

The dress of the peasant girl is picturesque, and when she goes to market she carries a coarse canvas bag, very brightly coloured, filled with farm produce—or if homeward bound—with certain purchases—upon her back.



It was impossible to buy these treasures at a shop. The only thing was to tackle the women, and they were very loth to part with the envied article ! Serbia's merchandise, like that of the Allies, suffered from the stress of the War.

But it was a time when in Britain every woman, who was prevented by age, duty or infirmity from serving the Empire in a more direct method, had at least a great ball of soft warm wool and a half-knitted scarf within her fingers—at such a time, those bags of the Serbian peasantry appealed to me as gifts for certain ladies in that magical land we call “home !”

I stopped the country people in the market-place but it was difficult to find an easy prey. No reasonable price seemed high enough to tempt. I met a man leading a pack-horse and on that horse were strung some bags, and one of those bags was a glorious colour, new and fresh.

Have that bag I would ! So I went into the middle of the road and quietly stopped the mare.

Now, I had had too many rebuffs in life to risk jumping straight at the subject.

The man seemed amazed and rather inclined to resent being brought peremptorily to a standstill.

On a beautiful day, in a beautiful country, it

takes more than a small matter to discourage one !

I launched forth, in very halting Serbian, on the weather, on the pony,—and then out came my cigarette-case—and we were friends !

“ Only one of the mad English ! ” I suppose the fellow thought. He was a slow-witted son of the soil.

To be stopped in that way by a stranger was very strange to him, but then he was not accustomed to the ways of foreigners.—I took the situation as a matter of course and the Serb is adaptable !

The moment was ripe ! I raised the bag, emptied the parcels on to the saddle and, placing some money beside them, looked at the man in a friendly way. He smiled. “ A new kind of game,” he thought. Without a word I held out my hand.

In Serbia, when a bargain is concluded in the selling of a horse or cattle, the men shake hands and so make the bargain legal. It is quite a little ceremonial !

My new friend took my hand ! The deed was done ! The bag was mine ! . . . That day I felt rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

One day whilst at Valjevo I awoke to the fact that the tents of the Scottish Women’s Unit were pitched on a neighbouring hill.

It was the Unit in command of Dr. Alice

Hutcheson, the same one which had sailed from England in the White Star Liner Transport and which had been commandeered at Malta by Lord Methuen.

Those of us who were privileged to see that camp were filled with a feeling of pride, pride in what our women were proving themselves capable of doing.

Before the final fiasco, when the devastating storm of battle again burst over the countryside, I was, for a short time, a guest of the S.W.H. Their good plain meals, wholesome and nutritious, came as a saving grace, their large bath-tent, with its little curtained cubicles, gave one daily pleasure.

From our tents we could see a beautiful vista of mountains. Every hour portrayed a panorama of fresh distinctive beauty.

In the warm haze of the sun, ever-changing cloudlets capped the mountain-peaks, while in fierce frowning aspects wind and rain showed Nature cruel, relentless, stern—and yet, withal, great and free and wonderful.

The picture was never the same, and yet in its varying guise it was ever restful. It always gave its message—to those who could read with understanding.

Sometimes some of my fellow-countrywomen from the camp on the hill would dine with me at the Grand Hotel. It was a mild dissipation,

still it had its interest. The restaurant was patronized by all the well-to-do inhabitants, and every evening by eight o'clock the large bare room, with its rows of tables, covered with coarse and much-soiled napery, was full to overflowing. Ventilation was a negative quality and the air grew more and more vitiated, denser and denser with the smoke as the hours passed by.

A string band started to play regularly at seven-thirty and it would continue with short intervals until after the bewitching hour of midnight. There was no comparison between the music offered in similar places of entertainment here in Britain and that in which we used to revel in the town of Valjevo.

Give a true-born gypsy, who has the musician's soul, his favourite instrument and he is second to none, and the artistes at the Grand Hotel were Zingali born and bred.

The menu might be what an Englishman would call restricted, but the food was very fair in quality and not ill-cooked. Of course, a Serbian cuisine differs from our own: garlic and peprika are not as a rule grateful to the British palate, nor, indeed, is the sour kimak, nor the skimmed-milk leathery cheese. Nevertheless, we often did get fair rice, excellent young chicken, and what was to us a great treat in those days—pancakes, minus lemon, of course, but *pancakes* were to be had for the asking!

Were I a dog my mouth would water with recollections of those delicious cups of coffee ! It is a beverage we cannot make in England : we neither grind it fine enough, nor roast it freshly. Go into the smallest mountain dwelling in the Balkans and one can revel in the little cups of nectar. It is coffee, pure unadulterated coffee, which the peasant drinks—chicory is left to grow in the fields !

At night when the mists rose in the valley and the dew made all things damp a most repugnant odour crept into the atmosphere, pervading the tents. Sometimes, probably according to the direction of the wind, the stench would become almost unsupportable and the reason why was only too apparent. To dig the ground deeper than an inch or so was to court disaster. The whole hill-side was one great charnel house. Friend and foe lay side by side in their shallow graves. In our rambles we came upon the skeletons of men and beasts, laid bare by the inclemency of wind or rain, or by the aid of pig or dog. Pieces of Austrian uniform were gradually being brought to light. One of my friends falling into a ditch found herself lying on a skeleton. . . .

From the Dining-tent one could see a Serbian Hospital. On several occasions about breakfast-time we saw men carrying stretchers and on those stretchers were long white forms. Shallow



holes were dug a few yards from the building and the things which the men had carried out would be hastily tipped in, the soil shovelled quickly over and the hole filled up.

Inference is obvious. Albeit the Serbian officer in command denied that this was the method of burying their dead. Why should *stretchers* be used to carry refuse? Besides, the shape of the burdens carried out was peculiarly significant. One cannot doubt the evidence of one's senses.



## CHAPTER V

ONE day business took me to Mladinovatz. All trains in Serbia seem to arrive in the middle of the night. Ours certainly did on this occasion! Now the weather clerk had taken it into his head to see how badly he could manage affairs. The rain came down in torrents and the darkness was oppressive.

I tackled the stationmaster with regard to some habitation in which to pass my time till daylight. His wits were not equal to the occasion, but he did what he could and ordered a clerk to accompany me and find quarters at one of the various possible places—but he did not seem sanguine!

We tried the one and only Inn. It was overwhelmingly full. Even in the great dining-room there were scores of soldiers, some drinking and singing, some sleeping on and under the tables and in every possible nook and corner.

Could I have a chair? Anything, anywhere, out of the rain! But the proprietor was firm. He could not, or he would not come to the rescue.

Matters were looking serious. We had been

to several gast-hauses and even to private houses, and at last we were still out in the street drenched to the skin, absolutely no nearer to finding a dry nook than we had been an hour before. In utter despair we stopped groups of soldiers who, like ourselves, were floating about looking for quarters. On fine nights we frequently saw the men sleeping by the road-side but in such a storm this procedure was utterly impracticable.

At last, a fellow answered hopefully. His words were almost unintelligible to me but I understood the gist. Somebody—somewhere—could take me in, *only* . . . ! I was far too tired and too damp to try to ascertain wherefore the qualification. If some kindly soul would but give me the right to sit under a roof, it was all for which I begged.

The railway employé wished me good luck and disappeared into the darkness. My new friend hastened forward. We splashed away through mud and water, and I wondered what I would have done had I been clad in the customary skirt of civilization. It was bad enough as things were—a little more, dragging wet petticoats, I would have sat down in the mud and howled !

Finally my guide led the way up a tiny entrance where there was room to walk just single file. Suddenly he stopped and I heard, though I could not see, that he knocked at a

door. A light flickered at the window and in another minute a woman stood on the step. She was fully dressed, save for her feet, for in Serbia it is the custom, certainly of the peasants, to go to bed in their day clothes. I have seen it repeatedly, even among those accredited as fairly well-to-do. Serbia is a country of many surprises!

The man explained, and in another moment I was standing in one of the rooms of a two-roomed cottage listening to the retreating footsteps of my erstwhile friend as he stamped away, well pleased with a tip and honestly far better pleased because I was glad to have achieved our object.

My hostess opened a door into a room the size of a cupboard. I noticed two trestle beds, one at either side; on that to the left lay a pile of clothes—at least what I took to be clothes, but we barely glanced into the den before the little lamp flickered and went suddenly out. I had seen enough. I groped my way to the empty bunk, spread my great-coat, wet as it was, to lie on and prepared to make the best of things.

It was obvious that there was no ventilation, and the vitiated atmosphere was appalling after the sweet wet air of night.

The presence of vermin is always distasteful. It seems to be one of those conditions in which our power of adaptability fails. Close and frequent acquaintanceship does not lessen the

horror. . . . Surely there was *something*—something breathing! I held my breath and listened. —Yes, there was someone in the room. I supposed it to be a peasant woman, and rightly judged that the sounds proceeded from what I had taken to be a pile of clothes. Suddenly there was an unmistakable snort, a snort that could not have come from other than strong masculine apparatus. I thought of the weather outside, and I realized that without absolute necessity the climatic conditions were such as decided the question of what was to be done. Rain beat against the window-panes, pattered on the roof, wind whistled shrilly round neighbouring buildings. I would wait, remain awake, but, at least, beneath a roof, and make off early in the morning before the unconscious sleeper awoke to the world's realities.

I must have dropped asleep, thus do needs of nature overcome the will. Perhaps I moved, at any rate I suddenly awoke with every conscious faculty alert, not half drowsily as might have been the case considering my fatigue.

There was an unmistakable sound of the handling of a box of matches. One might have done many things, but under extraordinary conditions one does not always balance pros and cons with nicety. I would lie quiet, pretend to be asleep—such was the only solution which presented itself.

A light shone out, flickered a moment, then made good.

“ Mon . . . Dieu ! . . . ”

Whoever my neighbour was he had gone to sleep in a room shared by none. He awoke in the night to find a khaki-clad figure stretched out as if asleep—a figure with long hair, obviously a British Red Cross woman.

It must have been an amazing waking, but I played the part of Brer Fox and lay low.

Morpheus must have rocked us both in her gentle arms, for the next thing I remembered was being startled out of sleep by martial music, which crashed into the stillness of the night. It sounded so loud, so close as to resemble some infernal instrument. It was no use pretending to sleep. In the utter quietness of that hour the clashing noise continued.

“ Qu'est-ce que vous faites, Madame ? ” came from the darkness in a musical educated voice.

“ But it's you, Monsieur, not I ! What are you doing ? ” I replied in the same language.

We both laughed. The situation was irresistible to those with a sense of humour.

Still that wretched march rang out. My friend of the matches lit up and then he turned to me.

“ Madame, I think it is that clock over there. If you will be so kind as . . . to get it . . . it



will waken all our neighbours . . . and I . . . am . . . I . . . I . . . *can't* . . . get out ! ”

I jumped up, stopping my laughter by a great effort of will, and seized the wretched article. It was a large metallic clock, an infernal cheap-jack German contrivance. I put it under my straw.

Then the light went out and again a manly voice spoke from the darkness,

“ I will get some clothes on, Madame. . . . It must . . . be three o'clock and time for me to join my regiment.”

My companion was a Serbian Doctor who had studied in Paris. With infinite tact and truest courtesy he made light of the quaint situation.

“ It is the fortune of War, Madame.”

And it was ! In normal times, in normal places, such a strange experience could never have occurred.

Presently the candle was again lighted and the woman came in with a jug of water and a basin. The doctor washed in the manner peculiar to his countrymen. Our hostess stood and poured water into his hands with which he bathed his face, that was all.

Then the officer turned to me. “ What a lot of luggage you have ! ” there was a merry boyish twinkle in his eyes but his tone was very plaintive. Luggage ? I had my top-coat, a handkerchief and comb !



Upon the latter envious looks were cast.

“ May I ? ”

I gladly gave consent and when the short thick hair had been smoothed into order I took the comb and breaking it in two handed him a piece. The little gift was accepted with real gratitude. A minute later and the door was closed and we could hear the tread of our friend passing up the narrow alley, into the darkness beyond.

Bugs or fleas, I determined to sleep, but we too often plan out a course of action only to find that a very different fate is written on our forehead.

Before six o'clock the woman was in the room again. She gave me no peace, and I could barely understand the drift of all she said.

Someone was ill, someone who had slept in the room in which we were the very night before and she wanted me to go and see the person.

The woman did not mean to let me sleep, so there was nothing for it but to go.

It was not far away. One could stretch one's arm from the window of my den across the narrow alley down which my guide had led me, and touch the side of the room wherein the sick lad lay.

One glance was sufficient ! The patient, a boy of sixteen, lay there, on what was a fearsome apology for a straw-filled mattress. By his side

slept another child, and his mother rose from the bed as I entered.

The lad was unconscious.

It was Typhus.

That day, as soon as my back was turned, neighbours flocked in and out. Towards night it was very obvious that the end was drawing near. I absolutely forbade any of the family to occupy the same bed. Certainly the mattress was a poor thing, filthy and odorous, and very far from restful, but it was the only one they had.

I made it plain to the parents that the child would certainly die before daybreak. They understood but seemed absolutely indifferent to the fact, nor did the mother suggest that they should wait to speed the little chap upon the Long Lone Trek.

Parents and children disappeared, my landlady hospitably giving them shelter. In every land the poor help the poor and give freely of their little to distressful neighbours.

There was really nothing to be done. The lad lay there, uncared for, neglected, unconscious of all that was passing. Those who had given him birth left him to his fate. To British thoughts there is something in such an action which is incomprehensively callous.

I opened the little window and the door and I sat down to a lonely vigil.

That side of the Balkan character which deals with love, with affection, and friendship, is not developed in the same way as it is with us. It has been stunted in its growth. The elements are there. The Serb is intended to be all that is natural to men born poets, born with the smell of Mother Earth in their nostrils and the song of the mountain woodlands in their ears.

Circumstances have forced the nation into a shell of iron. Past generations have dealt hardly with the people, all natural feeling has been driven in until their hearts have become encrusted with a shell, and it is possible that to some of us the Serb may seem a heartless man. In the Future for which we are fighting, the Future of Europe's Freedom, the Serbian will become a new man, and all his greater self will radiate, and the shell which has become so hardened and hammered as to be at times impenetrable will be broken asunder.

The true man will appear in the rebirth of the Nation.

Towards midnight I called the father, but the boy rallied and the man went off, grumbling a little at having been disturbed !

Let us draw a veil over the death-bed of that youth. It was not a pretty scene. Delirious and fearful, he saw apparitions invisible to me, Terror laid hold of his soul, his bright eyes seemed to see further than my eyes, at first he

cowered and trembled at the Awful Something which he saw, and then as the Horror approached (to judge from his eyes) with one frantic scream the poor child tried to fling himself out of bed.—He was a well-grown muscular boy though weakened by disease and it took all my force to hold him.

Later he suddenly grew less restless—suddenly his eyes changed. It seemed as if there was recognition, gratitude—just one look, and so, without a word, he died.

The mother had left the child in his need, now she came. Inured as one gets to the wailing of the women, that woman's shrieks made me squirm. Her lungs and vocal apparatus were unquestionably strong. The greater the noise she made the more grateful did her husband look. She was a wife of whom to be proud!

The heart of a stranger entering then would have been touched, tears would have filled his eyes at the picture of the mother overcome, hysterical with sorrow, extravagantly kissing the shoes the lad had worn, whilst neighbours dressed the corpse, a process which the women began with almost indecent haste as soon as they entered the room.

When I went in again a few hours later the place had been tidied. The lad's body lay in state, completely dressed. Neighbours were coming and going, gazing their fill, the children

ran in and out. Across the alley my hostess was preparing the bread cakes for the funeral.

I lit the candles I had bought, placing them at the head and at the feet of the corpse. It is the custom in Serbia immediately a person dies to light a candle so that light may be given to the spirit on its journey through the mists. Generally the candles used for this purpose are of yellow beeswax but I have seen ordinary white candles used in emergency, even the little bit of one which a man might happen to have in his pocket.



## CHAPTER VI

It was not until September that Serbia realized the clouds that were hovering near, the mighty forces of the Dual Monarchy, the one hundred thousand Germans ready to invade their land.

Rumours began to develop, the little newspapers were eagerly scanned by crowds of excited men. The faces of the women ceased to smile. They knew what it meant to have their homesteads crumbling over their heads, to see their fields dyed with the heart's blood of their bravest and best.

There is very little glamour in the hard reality of war. Heroic deeds are done as a matter of course in the way of duty. No one sees them, no one is there to record them. War spells the grim fierce struggle of a man for life, or the wholesale slaughter in the battlefields where the Fight is raging and Might is foe to Right.

At Valjevo a cottage stands in the fields which, if its stones could speak, would tell a tale of indescribable horror, but through the story there would run a song of purest beauty, a melody of what is the greatest and the best of all things upon earth. It would tell of noble-hearted



women who laid down their lives for the land which gave them birth.

It was an incident of the Austrian punitive expedition and a battle was raging round the little homestead.

Shells were bursting overhead, the awful din of mitrailleuse, of rifles rent the air. Hell was loose, everywhere horror and everywhere death.

From the cottage two young women saw the dreadful carnage, they saw the Serbian soldiers making their brave stand, they saw them driven back, falling, stricken unto death, and they saw the wounded mutilated, deeds diabolical done in the name of God.

A couple of old guns hung in the place and these were used by those daughters of a warlike people. Barricading themselves in they sniped methodically, swiftly, and sent to their rest a very creditable number of their Austrian foe. It was an unequal combat. Two lonely peasant women and the victorious Austrian forces, their own men, the gallant Serbs, hard pressed, beaten and forced back, unable to render them help.

The cottage was stormed and taken. Outside one sees where the plaster was chipped by bullets, the whole place shows signs of that unequal struggle. The Austrians were seen to enter. The women were never seen again.

By every rule of warfare their lives were justly forfeited.

This war is showing us the blackest side of Civilization. There was a time when Civilization was not so great a power, when Chivalry tempered an enemy's thirst for vengeance and knightly spurs were won by glorious deeds of Charity.

Those peasant girls were fighting for hearth and home in a very literal sense. They were only doing what Nature prompts in the breast of all who are unselfish. Had the officer in command of those Austrian soldiers given these heroines life and freedom, let them pass through their ranks untouched in chivalrous acknowledgment of their wondrous bravery, then the Recording Angel would have written his deed in letters of gold.

## CHAPTER VII

COLONEL N——, the most popular soldier in Serbia, had given me his word of honour as an Officer and Serb that when hostilities commenced I should be attached to the 1st Regiment of the Morava Division, for Red Cross work in the Field, in recognition of some work which I had done for Serbia. It had been dangerous work and by no means that which one would have chosen, but to serve our Ally was to serve Great Britain.

In those last days when war-clouds were gathering, and the whole atmosphere was charged with ominous dread, still the people clung unconsciously to hope. They would be pressed down by the foreboding, circumstances forced upon them, then suddenly the gloom would vanish and a bright look radiate from saddened eyes. "Oh, but the English are coming," they cried, "all will be well." . . . Bulgaria had sent her ultimatum! . . .

The last scene of the Third Act had begun.

I went to report myself to Colonel N——. It was not an easy matter to get a railway pass from Valjevo to Mladinovatz. The General

had left his bureau, the Colonel refused it, but at last I had the necessary papers, and then I literally raced to the station.

Two V.A.D.'s of the S.W.H. were waiting on the platform. They had brought my rucksack, kitbag, and equipment. Just a handshake, a word of farewell, and I was off. . . .

At Mladinovatz Colonel N—— assured me that all which he had promised should come to pass. I was to report myself at Kragujevatz, where I would get my military papers at Headquarters, and then join the regiment he had named—the 1st of his own Division. . . .

The trains were crowded with troops. Horse-boxes and ordinary goods-waggons were used for the soldiers. I travelled with officers in a third-class compartment. At dinner I was their guest. It was a picture fitted for the pen of an artist. The bare long carriage with its wooden seats facing the engine on either side, and the crowd of fine young Serbs—young men with all Life's vital blood coursing through their veins, on their way to what might be, must be for many, sudden or a lingering, painful, lonely death. Rugs were placed on a seat, we shared knives and forks as occasion demanded. At every station (halts were long and frequent) we heard the stirring sound of gypsy music. There, on the lines, by the side of the train the young fellows ranged themselves side by side, joined hands



КОМАНДА  
ДИВИЗ. ОБЛАСТИ

Л. Бр. *Смукли*

*До вришнуј српски  
Ген. Макове Чудур.  
Смукли Мили -  
Караиовач.*

*18/11/11 До Јасов На и  
Генер. Симић  
Моон а вришнуј Српски*

Serbian endorsement on passport.





and stepped out to the strain of the kola, the great national dance. The gypsy scampered along in front, scraping his fiddle ever faster and faster, followed by the Leader of the kola whilst the long line of spurred warriors capered after.

The gaiety was not mere bravado. Come what might these men were going out to do their duty, and a Serb does not know the meaning of physical fear. The officers thought of their men, they shielded them from any shadow of foreboding and sent them out with a happy lilt ringing in their ears.

I had to spend the night at a little wayside station. It was chilly sitting in the open on my rucksack, but soon the dawn broke through the misty night and only one pale star was left in the luminous sky.

I was happy. The dream of my childhood was coming true—that is, unless the word of an officer and gentleman held no better than the Kaiser's own.

It is not mere sentiment that sets one's heart responding to the Call of the Wild, to the invisible attraction of the Unknown, Unbeaten Tracks. The Fear of Life is born of loneliness and the dread conceived is greater than the terror of the Fathomless Plunge.

Given the choice, "Wilt thou have an easy life or hard? A fight or a tranquil existence?"

Given a free choice, the Recording Angel knows I would have said—"the harder—for the Fight!"

As I sat in the cold biting air of an early Balkan dawn all the pain of Life seemed worth the price if it would come to pass that I might be of service—bring succour to the wounded—though beneath an alien Flag, it would be for Britain!

A human soul is peculiarly detached from its fellows. Not another nor a million others will be allowed to make reply. When the Roll Call is made we each must give our own separate answer and show our own method of deduction, the way in which we ourselves have solved Life's Problem.

Men are calling out in agony to-day, the whole world runs in blood—then dared one, who is fitted by nature, experience and inclination, stand aside?

God may spell "Success" quite differently. The world must have its failures, else, did all touch the line, there would be no sport in the Race.

At Kragujevatz I knocked on a stone wall. Colonel Gentitch opened the papers that I took and worked himself into a rage. To begin with, it was addressed not to him but to Colonel Micheliavitch, and the Officer in Command of the Army Medical Department explained very



№ 11745

ВОДНОЕ КОМАНДА

ЛЕР. 25958

УБЈАВА

Зад. Рапорту Метиса (Carolina Matthews),  
која се јурије у I. класу. Војна дознака у  
Полука са сулугу

Др. Црв. беришн во се моларниом путнички возо-  
вика у I. класу. До  
Понесување се услихтиа властима, да именоваком у пу-  
ту не чине смету. И у сува. И у једно. И у једно. И у једно.

19. сеп. 1915. год.

Крстујана

Челник сачетан. Водне Команде.  
Црв. беришн. Л. Метиса

Military pass made out in favour of Dr. Matthews by which she was ordered to the 2nd Reserve Military Hospital to take up duty as voluntary medical assistant. She was entitled to a free first-class ticket on all railways to her destination.

curtly that *he* and he alone was almighty with regard to such arrangements.

There had been no time at Mladinovatz to get a railway pass, but the envelope I bore from Colonel N—— proved open Sesame, and satisfied officials. Now Colonel Gentitch demanded my pass and questioned me as to the method by which I had reached Kragujevatz. I told him.

“Well, you have managed to get to Kragujevatz and now you can get out of it. I wash my hands of the whole affair!”

Later, he asked if I would go to the Bosnian Frontier, and it was there where I experienced perhaps the most extraordinary time of a varied life.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE wards were large and airy in the Military Hospital, Uzitsi, and there were broad good corridors running the whole length of the building. The great fault of the place lay in its want of sanitation. Above all things Serbian hospital methods in this direction left much to be desired. Cats frisked about the kitchen with their young, crawling under the feet of those who went to pay the cook a visit. Untidy orderlies ate at the tables, soldiers broke the great pyramidal blocks of Russian sugar with a hatchet on the far from cleanly floor. When one remembered the many feet which passed and repassed, and the everlasting untrained kittens everywhere, it made one smile ! . . .

On October 15th, 1915, the order came from head-quarters to evacuate the town and trek for Montenegro. All was in commotion. The hospital staff at that moment consisted of two Serbian, a Macedonian and I, the British doctor-woman. Orders were given, men were hurrying here and there, bullock carts were ploughing their way into the courtyard through the mud.

We had known that the order would come.



## УВЕРЕЊЕ

Да је *Dr. Caroline Matthews, мајка*

и резервне појне Уздице болнице, и да је примио знак Црвеног  
Крста, наведен у Главни Деловодни протокол под Бр. 14168.

## ЛИЧНИ Опис

Година старости	<i>35</i>	Дане:	<i>24 јуни 1915</i>
Раст	<i>средњи</i>	Пос	<i>Кулачево</i>
Чело	<i>чисто</i>	Коса:	<i>чупкава</i>
Очи	<i>кисели</i>	Особени знаци	<i>нестан</i>
Бркови	<i>—</i>		

8 октобра 1915 год  
Уздице

Тврди и уверава

Управник болнице

**Dr. Резервна Војна Уздица Болница**

— К. Чаголов —

Бр.

*14134.1*

**УЗДИЦЕ**

санит. мајор,

*Dr. Matthews*

The above is a certificate in favour of Dr. Caroline Matthews, attached to the 2nd Reserve Military Hospital, Uzitsi, intimating that she had received the armband of the Red Cross Society registered under No. 14168. A personal description of Dr. Matthews then follows. The document is printed in Serbian, and the details are filled in in the same language.



Already some weeks previously the great Military Hospital had been all but emptied of its sick and wounded, only to receive again an influx of tired and stricken men.

The officers' wives packed their personal belongings, they packed their furniture and household goods, bullock cart after bullock cart creaked its way to the station, laden with chairs and tables, pianos and beds.

There was transport for all *lares et penates* but—the wounded and the sick were to be left behind. There was no transport for them! Orders from head-quarters were concise. The more slightly wounded and those who were able were bidden to make for their homesteads in the hills, or to trek to Chachak, the next garrison town.

A pitiful queue of men dragged themselves from beneath the great Red Cross into the Unknown. There was room for inanimate tables and chairs but there was no transport at all for these great homely heroes. Some started on their weary trek only to be caught by inexorable Fate which pursues stricken men in war-famished lands. Many of the poor lads must have laid down by the road-side chilled to the bone by the winds and want of food—never to rise again. Some retraced their steps and staggered up to me a few days later, shadows of men, grateful and relieved to find medical aid still procurable.

It is almost impossible for an insular British mind to realize the conditions and how matters stood in Uzsitsi. In an English village, under the same stress, our farmers' daughters would do their best to struggle with emergency. There is scarcely a village here where St. John Ambulance classes have not been held, our young people have some idea of First Aid work. Our people would tackle such a situation with kindly sympathy and common sense : they have been taught to think for themselves. The Serbs are a wonderful people ; but education is only just beginning to make headway and it is common to find men and women unable to read or write.

Their ideas are primitive. They have not come much into touch with the greater world. Their railways do not compare favourably with those of larger, richer countries. The women are carriers of children and tillers of the soil, books and art have no place in their lives, and in contradiction they have a poet's soul.

The wounded to be left ? Left without medical aid until the enemy entered ? And then ? . . . the world has learnt to know that nothing is sacred to German Kultur.

Our C.M.O. was a humane man. He interviewed a doctor who had been working for some months among the civilian population. This gentleman was the subject of a neutral

country. At the moment he was far from strong. He had been ill but was now convalescent. I had made his food and nursed him for some time to the best of my ability. It seemed a *sine qua non* that he, of a non-belligerent nation, would elect to stay, more especially since he was only convalescent and scarcely fit to travel.

The C.M.O. spoke to the man, never doubting that he would stand by the wounded.

But the doctor was married, the ties of home are strong, he hadn't come out to be killed, and since the town was in the line of the Austro-German advance, it certainly was impossible to guarantee what might happen.

Ghastly stories reached us from the zone of battle. The women and children were slaughtered at Shabatz, cruelties incredible had been part of the programme.

The man of the non-belligerent nation was decisive. The Germans were coming and *he* would depart.

For once I was glad to be a woman. Had I been a man my life would have been of value to the Empire—a very infinitesimal value, no doubt, but still the fact remains, one man one bayonet, and, with luck, one German the less.

There are times in warfare when, to save the majority of soldiers fit to fight again, the wounded and dying must be left to the mercy

of the foe. But I had seen those long lines of bullock carts laden with furniture—and there was no transport for the wounded.

Could I have looked the world in the face again if I left those men?—men who even with regular attention, regular dressing, lay on the Borderland—Death on the one side—Life on the other. Many were lying where neglect would spell a future worse than Death.

What was left but to face the music and try to cope with the work as far as one unaided Doctor could?

Major Popovitch, our C.M.O., was a tall Montenegrin with very gentle voice. Busy as he was that day, he spared time to see that my papers were in order, and just before he left, he turned to me.

“I don’t like to leave you,” he said. “What will Sir Ralph Paget say? Will you change your mind? It is not too late.”

My answer was to write a short note addressed to the British Commissioner explaining that since the Serbians were ordered to evacuate the town and were leaving their sick and wounded, I considered it my duty to stay by the latter. This letter I gave to Major Popovitch and he promised to see that it reached Sir Ralph Paget’s hands if ever he were able.

I did not know what had happened to all the British units which were known to be in Serbia.



II. P. 114428

114428  
УНИЦЕ

J'ai l'honneur de vous adresser  
de l'hôpital de Vienne à Vienne  
diplôme que le Dr Caroline Matthews  
m'a remis, par le Dr Brown docteur  
à exprimer le désir de rester  
à Vienne pour soigner les  
malades et les blessés, qui par  
l'état de leur santé il était  
impossible de s'évacuer.  
Le Dr Matthews joint de la Convention  
de Genève.  
Et les autorités sont priées  
de lui donner, aide dans toutes  
les circonstances.

Quatre  
à 13. 1. 15

Dr. Brown docteur  
Matthews

Document given to Dr. Matthews by the Serbian C.M.O. at Uzitsi. It states (in French) that Dr. Matthews stayed by her own free will to succour the wounded who were left behind by the Serbs on evacuation of the town; that she is entitled to the rights of the Geneva Convention; and it calls upon all in authority to aid her in all circumstances.



Rumour reached us that the Scottish had trekked to Montenegro and that all the Allies' Red Cross people were safely out of the country. I had no idea that a great number of doctors and sisters had chosen to remain by their patients.

## CHAPTER IX

It was a peculiar position for a woman. I wondered what would happen—we are not ignorant of the peculiar methods of Kultur. But I was filled with a deep contentment, and with it came a realization of what love of one's country really means.

There are hearts which vibrate to the Call of the Wild, they smash the chains of Convention asunder, Civilization appals them, they breathe the vast atmosphere of unbeaten tracks, growing greater of soul the while. They see the Great Crossed Flag waving in the breeze from Pole to Pole, and they know it and love it as stay-at-homers cannot do.

War has come to us and the man at home has learnt that he is Britain's and Britain his, but his brother Ishmael never had to learn the lesson which was unconsciously imbibed beneath the Silence of the Stars.

*Life was worth living in those days*—when the wounded poured in, the sick, the frozen and the dying. I was glad I stayed ! Looking back I know it was worth it all—for what would those men have done ? Many must have died, many

did die. One was up against odds, long odds, but the little done was better than nothing done at all. I was alone . . . as far as I knew the only Britisher in Serbia. Alone in a strange country without a single friend with whom to speak. It was the complete isolation which made the situation so quaint. I never dreamt that the peasants themselves would stand aloof, but previous to the Austro-German occupation not a woman called, save the sick and needy. They knew an English woman doctor had remained behind and that I was alone. I remembered how the peasant women in Calabria had come to the only woman, working with the soldiers, and served her in many little ways, they found and gave her of their little. We must, however, remember that the Serbians are not unintelligent—and they knew, that to the War Lord's legions, the sight of a Britisher is like a red rag to a bull !

Perhaps they not only realized that discretion is the better part of valour, but they may have thought that since I had stayed by my own free will I might be left to get out of the scrape as best I might.

The Military Hospital was situated some little distance outside the village. In the event of being fired upon, or things going badly, when the Austrians came, it seemed wiser to remove the patients to the Civil Hospital, a ramshackle

building in the heart of the little town. It was a wretched place, incredibly behind the times. The lack of sanitary measures was indescribable. Nursing arrangements, as managed by a couple of peasants and an untrained orderly (Bolnitza), were extremely primitive.

There were a few drugs, plenty of corrosive sublimate, for the rest—practically everything that would not be needed, but luckily there was my English R.A.M.C. pattern Tabloid Case on which to rely. I took a fair supply of cotton-wool from the Military Hospital. This, together with the compressed gauze, bandages and wool which I had taken out from England, constituted my stock-in-trade. Of instruments I had my own and the Serbians left a very fair supply.

Cockroaches have always been my bugbear. There at Uzsitsi they invaded every room, they invaded the food, they crawled here and paddled about there. The little brown ones flew to the light, flew over the room, flew into one's hair. They creeped between one's blankets, they tickled one's feet, they *bit*. It was no use being fastidious. They were all over the saucepans, they ran over the plates, they slept in the mugs.

One had to eat—or starve, and whether or no there was very little food at all. At first I made attempts always to wash my plate, but such precautions were of no avail.

There is a side to travelling on the vessels



which ply the Syrian coasts which used to cause me hours of distress and moments of horror and pathos, but when beetles and beasties of that ilk ran over my blankets and bit my face and flavoured my food in Serbia I sometimes smiled when I thought of the acute physical suffering it really had once meant. Custom teaches a man to be content under strange conditions.

A large barrel of water stood by the kitchen door, often its contents were covered with ice and underneath lay the drowned bodies of various forms of insectivoræ.

Costa was a broad-shouldered son of the soil. He wore the national costume, which well became him—a suit of heavy, coarse, brown cloth, trimmed with black braid, with wonderfully knitted socks of many colours and sandals with their narrow straps which were twisted several times a little higher than the ankle. He stood well over six feet, a fine physique, well proportioned, but one had only to look at the poor fellow's face. It told its own tale—of a pathological heart preventing the man from taking part in any strenuous work which might call for endurance and task the strength of the strong. I have never met a better-hearted fellow than this great Serb. On the Bosnian Frontier the people seemed a different breed from the Serb whom I had learnt to love, there was a different atmosphere. It often cheered one's

soul to see Costa with his great rough hands trying with all the force of his big humane nature to be gentle with the fractured limb. It was Costa who slept in a ward and who would rush for me at night and then we would fight together over some poor wreck of a fellow with the waiting Angel of Death. Very, very often I could not regret that we were vanquished, that a brave soldier went to his rest, under such appalling conditions; with the dark future looming ahead one could not wish their lives to be prolonged. It was Costa who was always willing, who did what he could, who helped me all he knew how.

Pero was the water-carrier and wood-hewer, incidentally nurse and orderly. A strange old man who, when he heard that his brother was forced to work in the bullock transport service for the Austro-Germans, wept like a child for many days. There was something dignified in his grief, as standing, shame-faced, he half turned his back, his head bowed.

It was a speaking picture of unadulterated peasant grief!

After a few moments we would see his shoulders heave and not all the most persuasive words, not all the most ingenuous comfort, served to cheer his saddened heart. Pero played his part, when the time came, with more courage than I could have expected, but with

an ignorance and touch of callous indifference very typical of those who have seen so little of the lighter side of life, to whom death is an everyday fact.

There were other people who seemed to make the hospital their home. What they were doing I could not imagine. They would not go, and as they were harmless and did odd jobs—if they fancied the doing—they stayed.

Milan was the man who had been left behind as my right hand. He was a soldier who, having been ill, had drifted into the ranks of Bolnitzas (equivalent to untrained orderlies). He had worked in hospitals for some time and had an indefinite idea of what was required. He was accustomed to cleaning instruments and could speak German as fluently as Serbian. One day I met Costa leaving the hospital with a great parcel under his arm. His furtive looks betrayed him.

What prompted me to stop the man and question as to the contents of his burden? It just seemed to be one of the things that had to be done, nor did I expect anything but some simple answer.

Milan came, Michel came, Angela and her satellites came and they all gathered round. Such a clatter and a fuss, but as I did not understand it did not matter what they said.

It was evident that there was trouble in the wind.

Milan showed his teeth, thrust out his jaw, and made himself nasty. A quick temper is sometimes desirable, but under conditions similar to those described, when pandemonium reigns amongst ignorant, vulgar people, then it is time to exercise self-command and playing them as puppets make yourself their master.

I was one, and they were many. There was no one to enforce obedience to my will—except myself. They were angry beyond measure, for they saw fading from their grasp a sum of money which meant riches in their eyes.

I undid the parcel.

There were pounds' worth of surgical instruments, each one clean and bright and neatly folded up in paper. Costa's intelligence never could have risen to such packing!

It was Milan with whom I had to deal! That fact was evident.

Of course, he was ready with a tale of lies. Since I had caught Costa at the front door, on his way to the village, it was estimating my intelligence at a very low par to inform me that he was then on his way to my room in order to give me the instruments. Of course, there was no attempt to explain *why* they were so carefully packed!

I took the matter in hand—straight. Told Milan not to weary his imagination, told him he would have very little chance of thieving again,

and made him there and then bring every single instrument in the place to my room.

Costa explained matters later. He had been told to take the packet to some man in the town—a shopkeeper, to whom Milan had sold the instruments—many of them my own, which I had brought out from England! However, the Bolnitztza and his friend were done out of their golden egg and I had enemies within the camp.

My room was a curious place. I wanted it cleaned and the women brushed it out, but the use of soap and water was not comprehensible to them. I was offered a bed—straw which had seen much service, putrid and filthy from many discharges. There was a long low seat in the room made of boards—I took that as my sleeping-place. It could be washed! For nearly four months I never knew the luxury of a straw-filled mattress, and it was not easy to smile when the boards were hard! There was no basin to wash in, but on the walls hung a metal box, in it a little water which dribbled slowly through a tap into a very filthy tray attached to the contrivance.

One's ablutions had to be made according to possibilities. I hunted for a bucket. The only two to be found were those used for the soiled dressings in the operating theatre. Every day I combed my hair and brushed it with a solution of corrosive sublimate, at first, when we had it,

with lysol—ridiculously inadequate, and the only thing to be done was to face what was and eat. At first it gave one a feeling of nausea, but habit is second nature. If one is unable to adapt oneself to circumstances my advice to all women—is to keep from the war zone.

Angela was a typical, fat, kindly Serbian peasant. She did the cooking and never once did I ever see a clean, or even fairly clean, rag in her hands. A small filthy piece of roughly made towelling was generally tucked round her portly waist and on it she wiped her large greasy hands or the half-washed plates. Sometimes she had another use for it. The peasants do not carry and rarely use a handkerchief.



## CHAPTER X

FOR the first few days after the "Militaire" had left, the little operating theatre used to be full to overflowing. I call it "theatre," but do not compare it with such as we have in civilized hospitals. Still, I have seen worse, for there was an old-fashioned operating-table, a wash-stand and cupboard. It was the only place in which to do dressings. The soldiers, worn and weary, came into the hall, one helped the other into the little theatre.

When would the Germans come? One said "To-morrow," another said "Not for a week," but no one knew anything for certain. We only knew that the Enemy *would* come!

It was my great desire to get all the wounded away who were capable of going. As the slighter cases were dressed they started on their tramp to Chachak, those who had friends made for the homesteads in the mountains.

Milan soon showed his true colours. Working day and night did not please him. The man grew impertinent and rude. I settled the question and forbade him to enter the theatre. Then things went along more smoothly. The

wounded helped each other. The man who had had his wound dressed gave chloroform to a comrade in a worse plight. When an operation had to be done the fellows cleared out into the yard and patiently awaited their turn. Everyone was brave, everyone unselfish. It was splendid to see those Serbs. They were a different type from the people in the village; they were the men I knew the Serbians to be—simple and honest, brave and courteous.

There was no time for meals. Angela would pop her head in at the door and hand in a basin of coffee or soup and a slice of black bread.

One dared not pause to realize the work to be faced. It was impossible for one pair of hands to do everything, one just had to dress and dress the cases, until one acted almost automatically.

Then one day there were fewer out-patients, and on the next none at all, and I wondered whether they would get a good start or if they would be captured on their way. There was plenty to be done. Some of the patients were in a desperate condition. The abdominal cases for the most part I left almost to nature, they died or managed—(a very small percentage)—to survive. It was not lack of will, but something *had* to be left, and abdominal operations, done under such circumstances, without the necessary nursing were almost certain to be a

failure. Leg cases greatly preponderated over others. One man had half his foot blown off by a dum-dum bullet. Several lads lay on the hard, unyielding, lumpy straw with compound fractures of the femur, refusing amputation yet in such a septic condition as to prelude the one inevitable end.

*Life was worth living in those days !*

I dared not realize the overwhelming quantity of work, dared not face the things left undone because there was neither means nor time to do them—and yet men's lives depended on the doing. I could only just *do* what I could, and then, when sheer fatigue became one's master, sleep as best I could, knowing a man can only play his own part in the battle.

Food got very scarce. They were good days when we were able to give a little loaf to each sick man. It was black bread and dirty, and its nutrient properties infinitesimal, but, such as it was, it was the staple food. Angela, the fat Serbian woman, when she brought me my bread and soup would kiss the former—her fat and none too cleanly lips smacking it with gusto. I would have preferred an unknissed piece, but it seemed a kind of almost sacred ceremonial with the woman, and remembering the veneration of the country folks in Palestine with regard to bread, one could not hurt her feelings. It was quaint to see Costa accept an apple. "Falla,

Doctor" (thank you), and the great fellow would kiss it as simply as any child.

The dead lay in an outhouse. I had given orders for their burial as each one passed away. But it was no one's business to bury the men. I did what I could short of going and seeing that the graves were dug. Unmourned and unburied they lay there, the rats scuttled away as I entered . . . the atmosphere around about told its own awful story.

We could not have held out much longer. In the town diphtheria was raging, there was scarcely one single house without the dreaded white flag hanging from the window (sign of death). Here and there one saw a black flag—the signal of a death from typhus. The women brought the children to me, but it was all a very hopeless business. The local apotaker's little stock of serum was very soon exhausted. There were children dying all around, but I could not cut myself into several people—and my first duty lay to the wounded.

One did one's best those days and did not pause to think of all that still was needed.

The little town looked deserted. All the better-class farmers had left. Tales drifted in from the villages beyond the valley, tales of the enemy's brutal deeds, tales of the suffering of the Serbs. Then many of the inhabitants were to be seen no more. Houses were locked up, shutters

nailed into place and the streets looked deserted. The peasants no longer came down from the hills, bullock carts no longer rumbled along the roads.

One day two women were brought in, both suffering from gunshot wounds. One was hit in the arm, the other in the thigh, and the shots had apparently been fired from fairly close quarters. The woman with the hip-wound showed wonderful pluck. She would not take chloroform and was a perfect stoic when I cut down and extracted the bullet. As I put the last turn to the bandages and said a cheering word in recognition of her fortitude, she seized my hand and kissed it, in gratitude, forgetful of her pain.

I did not know much Serbian, and for long explanations was dependent on Milan, whose German was curiously perfect.

As far as I could gather from these patients they had been fired upon by a man when some little distance from the town.

As the women were taken into a ward Milan further explained that they were coming in to market and were a mile or so away, when they heard a shot and a peasant who was some yards in front of them fell—hit by an unscen shooter.

They ran to help him, and in their turn were fired upon—the one as she went after the other, just as they reached the man.

Other peasants appeared, but anyone who



attempted to move towards the wounded man immediately received attention from the hidden sniper. None had dared to go, as he lay in the road, moaning at long intervals.

*It is well to have a temper.* Milan saw a little of mine that day!

Why had he not told me *at once*, and why had he not gone to help the man? As long as he thought I would force him to accompany me this rabbit-hearted Bolnitztza refused to tell, he said he didn't know where the tragedy had taken place.

However, when I bade him attend to some work in the hospital he condescended to tell me the direction. Then the women, when they understood my determination, tried forcibly to detain me.

I am a pretty good walker, but the strain and the want of nourishment were beginning to tell. I climbed the hills that day hurriedly and out of breath.

I had passed the stream, passed the bridge, and was away out in the country. I wondered if I had mistaken the place when I saw something lying on the road—the body of a man. The place was apparently deserted—but I remembered the unseen sniper. The two women and others had *reached* the man safely. The worst of it was I did not know from which side the shots had come. The road wound up the hill—to the



right, above, were bushes, thick enough to hide many men, below to the left were bushes and rocks—the murderer might be on either side.

The women had been coming towards the town; I had left it behind me. The one had been wounded in her right arm, the other—and the shot apparently from much closer quarters—in her left hip.

From these factors Sherlock Holmes might have deducted the precise spot where crouched the shooter.

For my part I could make no deduction at all. There is only one thing to be done under such circumstances and that is—take one's chance.

To try and cover both sides of the road—to keep a look-out all round *would* very likely end in being sniped. From their wounds I judged that the women had probably been fired on from above. The sharpshooter might have changed his hiding-place, and it was a toss up as to the side in which danger lay, but, at any rate, I determined to keep a close look-out on the right side and take my chance from the left!

If anyone could see me I took care that he could see I was armed—and on the *qui vive*.

Nothing happened.

I reached the body which lay on the road. The man had evidently fallen on his face and had then turned half round, perhaps he had tried to rise. He was dead when I found him, and there

were several wounds. Not for a moment did I relax my vigilance—it was a long lonely stretch of road and the sun was easting its last rays of reddish orange over the grey hill-tops in the distance. There was nothing more to be done. I had come too late. As I turned to go a bullock waggon came round the corner in the distance and I waited. The driver was a stolid, cross-grained old man, nothing appeared to surprise him. I went to meet him and told him he must bring the body into the village on his waggon: it seemed too ghastly to leave it there, alone, with night closing in. The great beasts splashed their way through the mud. We stopped near the murdered man.

As my new friend stooped to see if he could recognize the fellow a shot whizzed over our heads, far enough out of range. In spite of any precautions I was taken by surprise and had not the vaguest idea of the direction from which it came. All the same, it was well to teach our unseen foe a lesson and I fired two shots in succession, aiming at random. The owner of the cart scrambled to his cattle, taking what cover he could. Two or three shots quickly followed mine. They seemed to come from a certain clump of bushes and I retaliated, hoping for luck. Then there was silence—and the gloom of the evening descended like a pall.

The old farmer came out of his shelter, looking

fearfully around. Together we lifted the body on to the cart.

We were not going to leave the place without making an attempt to bring the fellow to book whoever he might be. The old Serb played the game.

With far more agility than one would have expected from his appearance he sprang up the hill-side. I followed. Once I thought there was something moving to the left and fired. We reached the bushes, but if anyone had been sheltered there they had moved away. I glanced round, it was getting too dark to be pleasant. The peasant's eyes in spite of his age were quicker than mine, he stooped down—and handed me a cartridge-case.

Later, closer inspection showed it to be Turkish, and a bullet extracted from the murdered man exactly fitted it.

I was never able to get the right end of this story. The peasants all gave different versions. One and all agreed that the deed had been done by a Serb, a neighbour, out of revenge. It was not the only case of violence and murder which occurred in the district during those days before the German advance.

The woman with the wounded arm left soon after, preferring to risk the pain and difficulty of a neglected injury to facing the trouble which might arise in the village in the enemy's hands.

Her friend could not be moved—for some days her life hung in the balance, but gradually, in what would seem an incredibly short space of time to a general practitioner in an English practice, the inflammation subsided, her temperature fell and the woman was out of danger. She was grateful and had a wonderfully brave patient spirit. We became good friends. The day before the enemy entered she determined to leave. It was a dangerous business—and I could not answer for the result of a long trek up to her little homestead. Still, there was no knowing what evils might be in store for those of us who remained in the village and so one could scarcely persuade her to stay. Neither bullock cart nor beast of any description could be got to convey her, and she left leaning on the arm of a friend, with a parcel of bandages and dressings and a word of hearty goodwill.

## CHAPTER XI

THE army of the Central Powers entered about the end of October.

A woman rushed into the ward.

"The Patrol!" she gasped.

No need to ask *which*!

I ran to my room, slipped my pistol into my breeches pocket, a second magazine ready in the other and went back to my patients. It was a weird time. A man told me 500 men had entered and were going from street to street and house to house.

There were peremptory knocks on the door.

I signed to Costa—he didn't look very happy, but with Angela peering over his shoulder he very reluctantly opened it.

Several Austrian soldiers marched into the building, bayonets fixed. Then an officer came in.

This was my first experience of the enemy and I wondered why I was not frightened.

Meanwhile Costa was being cross-questioned. I went out to them.

There was silence. The officer looked at me as if he did not believe the evidence of his own senses, then he saluted.

“Are you the English officer who is in command?” he asked courteously.

I told him it was so.

He bowed again, saluting, and held out his hand, introducing himself.

He had certainly not expected to see a British woman, though he had learnt that an English doctor had been left in charge.

I shook hands. He was a well-bred man and behaved as if we had met under very different circumstances.

Then we came to business.

“How many British soldiers had I in the place? How many Serb? What guns, ammunition, etc.?”

I explained that I was the only Britisher in the town, that the only soldiers I had were wounded, he might search the place but would find no weapons, that I was a non-combatant and working under the Red Cross.

Then I insisted that he should accompany me into one of the wards (his men were already rampaging round the hospital) and I took him to one or two of my Hungarian patients.

When the town was evacuated we had several Hungarians and Roumanian wounded—they happened too to be some of the most serious cases. I put them among the Serbs, thinking that by their presence they might prove some safeguard to the former. None of us could



understand them, but they were grateful for all I did and bore their pain and great discomfort with heroism not second to that of the Serbs themselves.

Before the officer went he gave me certain orders. I was to see that the people were all in their houses before six o'clock in the evenings. If a shot should be fired or if anyone should interfere with the soldiers, then the whole village would have to pay the penalty !

I wondered whether any revengeful heart lurked behind the apparently closed bars and shutters of the deserted homes !

There were a few more bows and salutes and the soldiers filed out.

Well, so far things seemed quiet enough, and certainly it was a very interesting experience—but what would the future bring ?

The next day the main army entered. During the morning a peasant woman caught me by my coat as I went into a ward. Her boy was ill, his leg was injured—would I go with her to see him ? How many of those calls I used to get ! Calls which I could not answer. If a patient could not come to me, very often it was impossible to find the time to make my way to them. I told the mother she must bring the lad to me—or wait. She was determined. With tears streaming down her face she button-holed me on my way to the operating theatre. When

Angela brought me some coffee her face appeared round the door, "Oh, doctor, doctor, come. He will surely die!"

One could bear it no longer. There were a hundred and fifty things to be done—but late in the afternoon I determined to go. The toes I was to have amputated must take their chance till the morrow, a couple of the serious cases must go undressed—unless they could be managed later. Milan had disappeared. Costa would do his ignorant best. However, if the lad's life was in the balance, and his home lay just across the village, I could not refuse the mother's piteous entreaties. I could only do the next thing which lay to hand. It would have made me desperate to pause and think of all the things which I was forced by circumstances to leave undone.

The house was not far. The room was neat and clean, and there were even luxuries—luxuries for Serbia—cushions and a proper bedstead showed that the people were fairly well-to-do for that part of the world.

In the low sunny room a lad of fifteen, partially dressed, lay on the bed propped up with many pillows—great fat pillows filled with feathers, not with the usual straw. Besides, these were covered with hand-made linen much be-worked.

A tubercular knee—of some months' standing

—this was the urgent case ! Work was waiting at the hospital, the doing of which meant relief to the sufferers. This lad had been seen by the Serbian C.M.O. before he left and the mother had not been content with the diagnosis.

In her love for the child the woman had been utterly callous of the needs of others.

The disease might have yielded to treatment—in England. Such a course was utterly out of the question under the conditions. I told the woman she must bring him to hospital. But she knew better than I. The child only needed medicine to cure it. I gave her some iodine and left the house—washing my hands of the business.

Cavalry was swinging down the main street. The whole village was full of Austro-German troops.

I hastened along—annoyed that I had left my post, hoping nothing had occurred during my absence.

It was near the time of sunset, and the glorious rich bright light threw up in strong relief the mounted men as they came down the mountain side. Infantry, cavalry, artillery—right away in the distance one could see columns streaming down the track.

I passed along, walking as quickly as I could without appearing to be unnecessarily hurried. The officers regarded me curiously.

The young man's courtesy when the patrol called had given me a hopeful impression, but some of these officers, evidently of high rank, were of a different calibre. The looks I received are hard to define. It was not an enemy's contempt of his foe. There was something fiendish, something horribly suggestive of the most evil side of human character in the bold looks directed at me. The evil was so real, so vivid as to feel almost like a blow in my face, and, as if after a blow, I felt sick and stunned.

I scuttled to my quarters with the instinct of a sorely wounded animal. My brain felt numbed—frozen. I began to realize what I had done! *I had of my own free will elected to face the enemy!*

The penalty might be no sinecure!

One cannot live a life full of changing pictures, full of varied human interest, without it becoming second nature to analyse the facial expressions of strangers in the street.

I have seen evil spirits look out from men's eyes, I have seen the fire of a hundred raging storms, seen the cunning of the red-stained hand, the snarling threat of the cad at bay—matched, checked and outwitted! I have seen the desire for human blood—my blood, and the lust of a human which makes man lower than the beasts, but I had never met before such peculiarly fiendish expressions of absolute hatred

as were directed towards me by those Teutonic officers.

Thank God it is generally given to our sisters and mothers to walk on paths where the love and tenderness of stronger arms shield and cherish them, and see their garments never reach the mud.

There is beauty in life, look where we will, if man desires to see it, but there is so much of the seamy side, so much of what is sordid, that often enough all that is lovely is hidden from view. A thousand voices may deny this fact, deny it because they have only seen one side or even many sides, but not *all* sides of life's picture.

In many a strange experience, in the unbeaten paths of little-known lands, among peoples still without the fetters civilization has placed on ourselves, never once have I seen such souls look out from the human countenance !

I was face to face, for the first time in my life, with the undisguised, unbalanced German *hatred* of my race. The uniforms with which I was to become familiar were more or less strange to me that day, but of one thing I felt sure, those officers were surely not servants of the Dual Monarchy. (In those days I still had to learn how German Kultur has pervaded the Austrian character.)

When I tucked my Hungarian patients up that night I told them of the incident, and



described the uniforms, and then learnt for a fact that which I had intuitively surmised—those men from whose eyes flashed something loathsome, whose souls looked out with such curious, evil, unadulterated hatred, were “Schwabe” officers. Like a flashlight on a picture it made all things comprehensible.

Early next morning I went to the gymnasium, which the enemy had turned into their headquarters, and demanded to see the Hungarian Commander. I was taken to the Oberst, a middle-aged Hungarian. I explained that I had been left in charge of the wounded and sick and showed the papers which Major Popovitch had given me, pointing out at the same time that I was *his* prisoner and that I claimed all the rights endorsed by the Geneva Convention.

Also I reported the existence of several wounded, erstwhile prisoners of the Serbs, Hungarians, Magyars and Roumanians, who had fallen into my hands with the wounded Slavs, and I did not think it would improve my prospects with the enemy if one of them should die before their presence was made known to the right official.

Later on, the Hungarian C.M.O., Dr. Elk, came to the hospital. He seemed to be a favourite among his fellows. The great difficulty we experienced was an inability to understand each other. Hungarian was his native language.



I did not know a single word. He spoke what *he* was pleased to call "German," but his speech was so disguised by dialectic accent that even short sentences were almost unintelligible to me. He understood fairly well what I said, but this very fact aggravated him, the more when he found that *his* words were almost incomprehensible to me! Nevertheless, he was a good fellow and by no means disposed to look unkindly upon the one odd Britisher.

He showed his appreciation of what I had done for his fellow-countrymen. He realized that I had done what I could and that they had shared the same as the Serbians. No difference had been made, though both foe and friend had known what it was to be hungry, what it was to suffer unspeakable agony—suffering intensified by the need of adequate nursing.

Dr. Elk was courteous and suave. He thanked me in the name of his compatriots and asked if I would stay and help them for three or four weeks, promising at the end of that time to send me back to England.

By the C.M.O.'s orders meals were sent in daily to the Hungarians, and twice a day an Austrian sergeant brought me my rations from the officers' mess. It was a vast improvement. The food was plain but good enough both in quality and quantity. Besides, there was enough for one or two of the worst wounded to share, and

the glass of Rhenish wine was a great boon to some of the stricken men. Besides, the Serbian rations which would otherwise have been doled out to the Hungarians now were shared by the other men in their wards. They had got on well enough, enemy and foe, as they lay and suffered there, companions in misfortune.

On the second day of the occupation I wanted to speak to the "Apotaker." His wife was in the dusty, musty little shop trying to supply various peasants with their needs, flustering here and there, too excited to measure out the powder in her hand. The woman looked haggard and scared. The night before her husband had been taken to the school. All the men of the village had been marshalled there and she had not seen him since. The women had not dared to interfere, nor had they attempted to find out what was in progress.

Now, it was very necessary for me to consult the man, and, besides, the idea of all the men having been taken away, the women and children left unprotected, did not lead to a feeling of security. We have heard too often from Belgium of such measures—and their *sequelæ*.

I determined to see for myself, and if there should be foul play one or two Germans at least should "cross over" with the Serbs—just as many as I might have time to send. I went to the place, passing beneath the curious looks

of the blue-coated men who swarmed here, there and everywhere. The enemy were bivouacking in the large market-square. And in the vicinity were drawn up deep lines of Serbians, old men and young boys. The majority looked sullen, but while their eyes alone told of an inward fear, their demeanour was utterly nonchalant. I did not recognize the Apothaker and was passing along, as close to their ranks as I dared, when I heard his voice speaking very low.

"Be quick. Take no notice. Get back to hospital!"

I passed on obediently, not daring to turn my head lest the wrath of the guard should be aroused. It went horribly against the grain to leave those furrowed, anxious faces, but to stay might have only precipitated matters.

I did not return at once to the hospital. I went to the man's wife and tried to reassure her. The house was nearer to the square than the ramshackle place from which hung the Red Cross flag. The whole time my ears were on the alert, presently I feared there might be firing and . . . but that day passed quietly.

For three nights and days the men were kept prisoners. I never learnt what was said or done to them, but from that moment the spirit of the little community, without leaders to help them, was definitely broken.

If a Serb had been asked to lie down in the

road and be trampled upon, the mere request from a soldier would have sufficed. He would have done so, at that time, without any demur.

One day a woman came to me crying bitterly. Soldiers had entered her home late one evening. They had been friendly enough for a while and had started to play with one of her children—a little girl aged about ten. Later, the fellows took the child away and she had not come back.

Hers was not the first case which came to my knowledge, but peasant girls in that district were not conspicuous for modesty. Later on, when I was thrown into the police cell at Belgrade, I found there two little girls, thirteen and ten, and one a few years older who had followed the army of their own free will and had been left stranded.

Nevertheless, I knew that children were enticed from their homes, sometimes they returned the next day, sometimes they were not seen again.

I laid a formal complaint before the Hungarian Kommando.

“If the peasants could bring a definite charge against a particular soldier that man should be punished.” This was the gist of that official’s answer.

But how was the distraught mother to differentiate between one uniformed figure and

another ? And if she did, she could not identify him among the hosts of his fellows.

To interfere with a soldier was to be shot—at sight. This intimation was posted with a number of other regulations, in the form of a notice, on the walls of the town.

The women had no redress. Meanwhile the Kaiser's soldiers had to be fed with all the best before either the Serbian sick or the Serbian children might have their daily rations. Often there was no bread, and all that I could give my poor friends was a little soup, and perhaps with luck some beans.

One day the C.M.O. came and he did not send his men away empty-handed. Of the large quantity of Red Cross supplies and woollen blankets sent to Serbia by France and England, a few had drifted even so far as this little frontier hospital. They were British blankets, some still retaining an originally white appearance, some were discoloured and stained, but they were all good fleecy ones. It made one furiously indignant to see those blankets seized by the Austrians, the Serbian wounded simply left without covering at all, and with the exception of a few very aged rags the whole consignment carted off to the buildings which were hastily being improvised into hospitals beneath the black and yellow flag.

For a month I worked with Dr. Elk, then he



was ordered to the front, and another C.M.O. came in his place.

Then trouble loomed.

This new man had his prejudices. I think he must have sung the "Hymn of Hate" when lying in his cradle. He was a coward and a bully.

What that man was by nature—that to which he had allowed himself gradually to become, was written on the ill-formed features of his face.

In the Germans' intense hatred for the British Empire lies a tiny film of patriotism. They are jealous of our Greatness, jealous for their Fatherland. But Dr. Goldener's ingrained hatred of our nation and of all things pertaining to it, was *secondary* in his selfish nature to all that pertained solely and wholly to himself.

I was a woman, albeit an Englishwoman, and, with the exception of the peasants, there were no others in the place. His methods were worthy of the man. My rations had not been sent for a few days, and food had become a matter of difficulty. Dr. Goldener rectified the trouble instantly, in several ways. He busied himself in seeing to my comfort.

For months past it had been impossible to get leather. I had the boots I stood in, and not only were no others procurable, but the old ones could not be patched. Even before I left Valjevo a man who had previously made me a



most serviceable pair had been unable to repeat the order. Leather was not to be got for money.

Now my riding-boots had seen extremely heavy wear since the early days of summer—and were showing the result of hard service.

There came a day when one could not be worn without too great discomfort. However, it was war and I made the best of things, hopping about in a pair of native sandals.

The new C.M.O. found it necessary to make frequent calls with regard to my footwear! His servant was sent off with the riding-boots and a capital job the Austrian repairer made of them. Then the doctor was obliged to see them on, to feel if they fitted well, and so on, and so on.

He would call in the evening and sit in my room—studying the great map one of the Scottish had given me—a capital map of the Balkan States, printed in Germany, which, bought in Salonica, had, in happier days, graced the dining-tent of the S.W.H. Great was the wailing when it disappeared—a gift to their guest by the Head of the Laundry—the erstwhile owner of the treasure.

One day the C.M.O. told me that Serbia had fallen, that all the nation held was a little bit of country parallel to Albania.

The officer of the Kaiser might be telling the truth—of course, it was possible, but that Serbia

was lost? It seemed incredible. What had become of the brave lads I had seen on their way to the front?

*Serbia lost?* In so short a time? I felt that the man spoke the truth but could not grasp its import.

I asked if many English had been taken, but he assured me that I was the only Britisher in Serbia!

All the various units, so he told me, had trekked for Albania or Montenegro. Once he said that some of their regiments had passed through Valjevo, that Kragujevatz had fallen into their hands, that Skopje and Nish were theirs—there remained to the Serbian people only that territory near the Albanian frontier from Sjenica, Novibazar, Mitrovitza, Prishtina. They still held Prishtina and Monastir. Taking my map he drew a pencilled line—and left me to digest the news.

The next day I saw the Oberst who corroborated this, more especially did they persist in the statement that I was the only British prisoner taken by the Central Powers in Serbia.

Evidently a lie with intention!

Since Dr. Elk left there had been very little said about my returning to England. At first I had hoped that the Austro-Germanic occupation of Uzsitsi would only be a temporary affair, now I began to realize that to get into the enemy's hands is easier than to get out of them.

It was disheartening news, but, knowing that the veracity of the enemy is not always to be trusted, I hoped against hope.

I was told by more than one officer of the Central Powers that there was little done to harass them on their advance throughout Serbia. Personally I cannot give an opinion. I know that iron bridges were destroyed in face of the Austrian advance twelve months previously, but the wooden erections built to take their place by the Serbs were left intact during those dark days of 1915.

At the railways and at various depots a large number of shells and ammunition were left. The Germans came in for a very good haul. Some of the stacks of shells I saw myself.

At Uzitsi railway station there were trucks and coal ready for the enemy; in some towns, so they told me, the engines were in the station coaled and ready. Perhaps the Serbians were disheartened. There can be no question of their extraordinary courage: their faithfulness to their ideal, to the nation, to their race, has been proved during a period of almost half a thousand years. They never thought that they would have to stand alone—their tales of the one hundred thousand Germans massing on the northern frontier were discredited by the Allied Powers.

When the storm broke—Serbia was stunned.

The one hundred thousand Germans crossed the northern frontier right enough, but where were the British troops? Where the army of the French Republic? Austrians poured across the west, Bulgars pressed them on the east—the Huns came down like a mailed fist.

“The Germans!”

They were an enemy of untried quality. The little State, worn out with a series of hard-fought wars—wars for freedom—almost blotted out by the ravages of fever—was standing up against the greatest military power of Europe—was up against a machine-made, war-infected, iron-governed enemy, an enemy fighting hand-in-hand, striking at the same moment with Serbia's own old personal foes—the Austrian, Hungarian and Bulgar.

## CHAPTER XII

ACCORDING to the enemy I was the only Britisher they had seized in Serbia. It took me a little time to digest the fact, and, curiously enough, I believed it to be the truth. I knew that the Scottish units both at Mladinovatz and at Valjevo had been prepared to evacuate at a moment's notice. What more likely than that they had escaped and reached a neutral or a friendly country ?

I shall never feel a nonentity again ! With the knowledge that I was the only British prisoner of war, *at least* in that area, with the realization of all that this meant—*alone* in the hands of the Central Powers—came also another thought. I am English. A very insignificant unit of the Empire—but I was all there was of it out there ! I stood for England, Scotland and Ireland and the Dominions beyond the Seas !

People have often said, since my return to the dear old Homeland, "Were you not frightened ?" "I don't know how you pulled through it."

Well, I think it was this realization of my nationality that upheld me. Fear ? One *could*

not show the white feather to Britain's foe. Afraid of the enemy who would tear down our flag—by foul means, when they cannot by fair play? A thousand times—No!

To some of us who have heard the "Call of the Wild," who have chummed with strange peoples, and walked along untrodden paths and seen the glory of the Infinite untouched by man, to us is given the real valuation of the British Flag. We have learnt what the Empire means and our love for our King is a very real and a personal matter.

Dr. Goldener tried in every way to show himself in a pleasant light, but he was one of those men whose character is written on his face. Moreover, those qualities which we have come to associate with the Germanic mind were very prominent in his nature. He was a coward and a bully, a man whose lower nature governed his life, whose germ of the higher Self, which is inherent in every human being, even the worst, had never been allowed to grow, base thoughts and animal propensities had hopelessly checked its finer development. This was the man with whom as the C.M.O. I was bound to come in almost daily contact, under whose direction the prisoner doctor had to work.

Milan, the Bolnitza whom I have mentioned, was a thoroughgoing rascal. He was a Serbian soldier. I had destroyed his uniform and sworn



that he was a peasant lad, that I had no able-bodied soldiers in the hospital.

The first day, when the patrol came, we had been ordered to give up all arms and ammunition under pain of death. The next day notices were posted about the town that anyone found with a knife, rifle, revolver, any firearm or weapon, would be shot at sight (as usual)—and, *as well as the culprit, all the people in the house would suffer the same penalty—men, women and children!*

Now, my pistol—a Salvage automatic—was in my pocket when I showed the patrol round. I had taken it to Serbia for self-defence, not to give quietly up to the Germans as a kind of free gift for them to use upon our friends.

When the enemy came it seemed like a friend, a very trusty one at that. At any moment I knew they might see red, the once peaceful little village might be the scene of brutal slaughter—and, if that should happen, what could one do better than to die, accounting for as many of the Kaiser's men as Fate in her kindness might permit?

As days went on I knew that I was carrying my life literally in my hand. In those days I slept in my shirt and breeches, it was impossible to know when soldiers might enter my room, when the C.M.O. might come with some pretext. The pistol never left my pocket. Day or night it was there—and often enough the mere fact

gave me a vast feeling of security. The C.M.O. was not a pleasant gentleman to tackle—but to my hand lay the key which could open the gate—if the worst came to the worst. Sometimes my fingers ached—and the gate was almost pressed open. Many a time that man stood nearer the precipice than ever he had a suspicion.

All the same, I knew, if it were found, it was not I alone who would suffer. The obvious device was to get rid of it.

But an automatic Salvage—a .38 calibre—is not a thing which one can easily hide. It was impossible to bury it. There were soldiers everywhere, someone would see me.

With the exception of Costa there was not a Serb I could trust. There may have been fine men and good in the village, but they had kept out of my way and it was very obvious since the Occupation that fear would prevent any inhabitant from running the ghost of a risk. Costa was game and we consulted together. He would have taken the pistol and hidden it safely, so he said, but the dear fellow's intelligence was not of the kind to pitch against a German's. The leather holster and pouch he slipped into his shirt and went off to a friend, a shoemaker, with whom I had spoken in happier days.

On the morrow Costa's sandals had nice new patches of English leather—necessary patches, for the man was almost bare-footed.

The best way to hide anything is to do it openly. People often do not believe the evidence of their own senses ! I stood on the little bridge which spanned the river late one afternoon, when the light was failing, and it was time by regulations to hasten indoors. I stood there, in a pensive mood, idly throwing in stones. A soldier passed and stopped for a crack with the sentry. It was then or never. Without changing my position, without a moment's hesitation, in went the breech of my pistol and splash ! a stone followed and still another with rhythmic precision.

Finally I yawned, passed a word with the soldier on duty and went on my way through the hospital gate.

I felt very pleased with life that night ! If my weapon did fall into the hands of the Huns, at least it was rendered utterly useless, and I slept the sleep of the just.

Of course, the Serbians knew I had possessed a revolver. They had seen it on me the day the two women had come in shot, they had seen me wearing it once or twice when obliged to tramp into the country.

Milan was a Serb, at least he claimed to be. I wonder if he was ? He spoke German exceedingly well, and was a very great favourite with the enemy ! Dr. Goldener and he were very friendly, a most suitable friendship, for they were birds of a feather.

Dr. Elk, before he left, had, at my express desire, taken Milan away from the hospital. His impertinence was inconceivable, his laziness incorrigible. Before the enemy came, after grumbling in the morning he would depart for the day. The first enemy C.M.O. was a well-bred man, I laid the matter before him and told him of the attempt made to steal my instruments, of the man's extreme rudeness and disobedience. Dr. Elk at once gave the order—and Milan had been drafted to some other Red Cross work. When Dr. Goldener came on the scene I woke up one morning to find Milan in his old place. It was more than aggravating, it was one of the German's cultured methods of putting on the thumbscrew.

However, I realized I was at their mercy, that there was nothing that would better please the medical officer and incidentally the orderly, than to be made aware of the fact that they had succeeded in making life unbearable. I just would not give them so much satisfaction!

"Back again, Milan? There's plenty to do," was all the remark I made.

Now, Milan had a big bill against me. He determined to retaliate for being called to order. One day he went to the authorities and told them that the foreign doctor, who had stayed by his comrades when their own officers forsook them, was armed with a service revolver.

Late one night I was wakened—four soldiers and an officer were in my room.

“Where is your pistol?”

The game was up and I knew it! Sometimes one must bow to the inevitable. It had come, and it is always well to fall in gracefully with whatever next must be.

Lamb-like and with an innocent expression I handed the weapon over. It must have been a quaint picture. The bear garden of a room, the little figure in breeches and bare feet—giving the pistol up as if it were a pencil, full well knowing what was written on those placards in the town. The officer took the little gun—he bowed, then he looked at it—and saw! He swore.

“You know the penalty, Frau Doctor?”

I bowed and put on my boots. It was the fortune of war!

Caught out!

Well, it was worth it! One woman, more or less, what did it matter? A decent automatic pistol in the hands of the Germans might account for brave English lives. At least mine would never do that!

I was content to pay the penalty, but the Oberst was Hungarian. He had not yet become so saturated with the lust of blood as to take a pleasure in killing women.

I think at heart he did not dislike the way in



which a woman had defied them. I told him that in my place he would have done the same.

“When the war is over,” I asked, “will you tell them in England that a *Serbian soldier* betrayed me.”

I don't think that the Oberst himself was aware of the identity of my accuser. If his looks did not belie him it was not a trick which had his sympathy. Perhaps this influenced him to act humanely.

Certainly had I been taken out to be shot I would not have felt the penalty unjust. We had been warned—I knew the order, and it had been in my own hands—I had defied the Central Powers, fully aware of what it might mean! . . . But I was sent back to the hospital. Apparently no further notice was taken of the affair, and yet from that hour I was closely watched.



## CHAPTER XIII

ONE day some Austrian stretcher-bearers entered the ward with a patient. One glance at the fellow was sufficient. I looked at the Red Cross man in charge. He spoke tersely, anxious to be rid of his burden.

“Cholera !”

So it had come at last.

Several suspected cases had been sent to me—but this time there could be no doubt about the diagnosis. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. The fellow had been brought straight into a ward full of Serbs. In a moment I had him whisked out and into another room—the only place where there could be some attempt made at isolation. It was the ward given over to Austrian patients. Very quickly these latter were bundled into a room adjoining the Serbian ward.

The Red Cross men went, leaving the infected stretcher and glad to get away.

Whether to fight the cholera or let the infection spread. That was the question.

Had I known Serbia was lost I might have been less keen on playing the part I did. The

town was full of troops. Cholera, left to its own devices, might considerably weaken the enemy forces. But the Serbs? What if they won their way back? I had no means of knowing the real significance of the Great Retreat.

There had been whispers, before the evacuation, of the British being at Nish—of fighting at Monastir. These rumours decided me. *The cholera had to be fought.*

I spoke to Costa, Milan, Michel and the women, but the Serbian is ignorant, he is also stubborn. They had learnt their lesson about typhus sufficiently well to have some dread of the scourge, but the word “cholera” held no meaning to them. It was an illness. Well, there were doctors to see to it, it was none of their business.

I saw the fight was going to be a stiff one. Soon the C.M.O. arrived. By his orders all the Austrian cases save the new-comer were removed to an emergency hospital prepared in the town. Dr. Goldener did not enter the ward, he stood in the corridor, once or twice looked in at the door and shouted out his orders.

In the evening he called again. I reported that Milan and Co. were spreading infection as fast as they could. In absolute defiance of the order given they had been out and about in town, and peasants had come into the building.

The C.M.O. called up the offenders, they were placed in a row and soldiers with fixed bayonets

stood on guard. The officer did not speak Serbian, but that did not matter. He made Milan translate whilst gestures and voice sufficed for the rest. The wretched little man literally danced. He seized a bayonet, pointed it at Pero. I thought he only meant to scare the man, but if mischief occurred I was ready. The women were harangued. If anyone went out of the hospital into the town they would be arrested and shot. If anyone was allowed to enter the building, the man or woman responsible for them coming in would be taken by the soldiers and bayoneted—and so on.

We talked matters over. Stringent precautions must be taken if infection was to be stayed, Pero alone must attend to the wants of the man and he must not leave the room, food would be taken to the door, and so on.

But if the Serb is ignorant his stubbornness is colossal. Threats were no good, orders were disobeyed. Children were to be found hidden in cupboards, neighbours sneaked in, our folks sneaked out. I was left to tackle the emergency as best I could, knowing full well that as soon as I turned my back every order would be disregarded. I determined to lock Pero and the cholera patients up in their room.

Easier said than done. Michel refused to put the lock on the door. It was the first time a Serb had flatly refused to obey me.

I put the lock on the door myself, and absolutely ignored the man from that moment until the very day I left. It was useless to order him out of the place, I was no longer in command. To complain to the C.M.O. would be to give him satisfaction. Besides, the conduct of this officer was not such as would be likely to urge the people to be their better selves. He called occasionally to see how matters were progressing. He would stand in the hall, but he never entered the cholera ward further than putting his head round the door, sucking lozenges the while, and gruffly ordering me to feel this man's pulse or show him that man's hand. He was frightened, utterly frightened, of infection. When I walked towards him he retreated waving me off. It was worthy of the Germans to put a prisoner at the post of danger, to leave the only woman in the infected house.

The building was absolutely the last place which should have been used for infectious fevers, the lack of adequate sanitation, the difficulty of ventilation, the overcrowded wards, everything was against one.

The cholera did not spread; that it did not was almost enough to make one believe in an inexplicable Fate. It must have been ordained, for every circumstance tended to fan the evil onward.

Word came to me that Persa, the woman who had been wounded in the hip, was in desperate

straits. Neglect had done its work. There was nothing for it but to go to her homestead, away in the hills. To get a pass from the enemy was another matter.

I determined to go without.

It was a great tramp. Past the spot where the tragedy had taken place. Here and there I was challenged by the sentries, but I played my part, and the Red Cross on my sleeve did the rest. Right across snow-white fields, along mountain tracks, where one had to climb with goat-like tread—a slip and the end might be messy far below. I had been in the same direction once before, but it was before the great white mantle had descended from the heavens, obliterating landmarks. On that occasion I had notched a tree here and there as I cut my way through hedges—now I was dependent on those marks. The condition of the ground retarded progress and it was late before I saw the little hovel. Daylight had given place to sunset, sunset to an emerald blue—and everywhere above the stars were peeping forth. Complete silence encompassed all the earth. One took big breaths, and, just as the snow-clad hills around were merging into shadows, I seemed drawn into a perfect oneness with the beauty of the scene. . . .

What a welcome there was on arrival at my destination! A home? Yes, a wooden shanty divided into two compartments.



In the one a fire burnt on the ground and the smoke of damp wood caused painful irritation, one's eyes streamed, one's throat contracted. Outside it was bitterly, bitterly cold—so that it was a question whether to face discomfort for the luxury of warmth ! There was no furniture, a pile of logs lay on the earth, and fowls, roosting where they could, were disturbed by our entrance. The inner room was bedroom, living-room and every other room. A fire from the first room projected into the second, under an oven. The atmosphere was dank, fetid, a mixture of a thousand most unpleasant smells. In one corner was a raised shelf, about seven feet long and six feet broad, covered with straw and a blanket. Here my patient lay, and her welcome made the journey well worth while. As I dressed the wound and made her as comfortable as circumstances permitted a neighbour bustled in and out.

I had brought a piece of candle, for the peasants are poor, and when the light fails that must suffice which comes from the fire—that is if they possess such a luxury. There were two small wooden windows, mere slits in the wall, but they were better than nothing. I opened them in spite of the remonstrances of “Zime, gospodgjer” (Cold, lady).

A number of neighbours began to arrive, they came in at the door and stood in a couple of lines,



boys and girls in front, women working with the distaffs at their back, the eyes of all turned towards the foreigner. Not a smile on a single face. The woman who had been busy making preparations brought in the quaintest table on which I ever set my eyes. It was a round slice of wood sawn from the trunk of some great tree, raised from the ground by three short legs, about a foot in height. It was placed on the floor and a tiny roughly made stool was given me for my accommodation. I squatted down feeling like a monkey in a circus.

The oven was open and an odour of hot maize pervaded the room. A huge loaf was planked on the festive board. Half a dozen little eggs, hard boiled, shellless, and a curious concoction of jam (a mixture of plum, apple and any other available fruit all cooked together and pomaded into a gelatinous mass) were put on the table.

Eleven pairs of eyes solemnly followed my every movement. It was an appreciative audience. In the middle my host came in, plus a big bottle of rakiya—the native spirit, very strong but not unpalatable. The man had already partaken freely, now he pressed a glass on me, and, as I refused, drank it himself plus another one to keep the balance even, then a few minutes later he would smilingly hand me another little measure full, for all the world just as if the idea had only just occurred

to him—and the same pantomime, the same performance would be gone through once again!

I tried to talk to the women with my halting Serbian words, but they were painfully shy, and conversation did not flourish.

When, finally, I got up to go the kindly people would not listen to me. They blocked my way.

It was not safe. I must stay the night, they said.

I was firm. I had come without a pass and the sooner back the better. The moon was bright and I rather looked forward to the long lonely walk across the hills. Gradually the neighbours dispersed, I gave a few last directions to my patients and to a woman who promised to dress the wound to the best of her ability. The man was out of the room, we three were together, and suddenly Persa's manner changed; with real concern she begged me not to leave; she held my hand, kissing it the while. It was dangerous, I would never arrive at Uzsitsi alive, so moaned the poor woman.

I reassured her. I told her that the enemy would respect the Red Cross. Then, to my surprise, she burst out with the fact that it was not the Germans nor the Austrians she feared that night for me. I knew, none better, how she herself had received her wounds . . . there were men about in the hills who were not to be trusted . . . not the enemy . . . just then her husband came and I had to deduce what I could.

The women were honestly distressed. It seemed to me that there was mischief afoot in the district and they knew more than they dared to say.

It is all very well to face certain death, but I had no desire to be badly wounded or to be maltreated in the hills. Discretion after all sometimes is the better part of valour ! I decided to remain the night. The people were obviously much relieved at my decision. The neighbour flung her arms round my neck and kissed me on the cheek. A place on the bed was offered me, but I preferred to sleep in a shed outside ! But it would be cold ; besides, the young cow was there. I would stay in this warm room, they begged. It was kindly meant, but I was adamant and, of course, I got my way.

It was a particularly cold frosty night. The shed was so constructed as to let the air whistle through between the logs. I nestled down into the not particularly clean straw in Service coat, riding-boots and all. I was thankful for my Trench sleeping-cap, which, when pulled down, became a helmet serving two purposes—a preventive against the chance invasion of beasties and as a protection against the sharp-biting frost. During the night the cold grew more and more intense, but sheer fatigue closed my eyes from time to time. A rat would come out perhaps with a comrade to take stock of the

strange invader—only to scamper away as, realizing their presence, I used a little dainty English.

With daylight I arose to find my friends were already astir. They did not have much difficulty with regard to toilet—they shook themselves, and presto ! they were ready for another day.

I looked at the neighbour's face in the clearer light of the day and wondered what she would look like if a few layers of the very obvious dirt were removed. I remembered her kiss of the previous evening !

On the way back, on the bridge before entering the town, I was tackled by the sentry. He was Hungarian. Not having any authority for being out I thought it best to make friends with the men. I joined them at the fire and found that the fellow's two companions were Roumanians.—The Hungarian, even after I had wasted a lot of breath, still persisted in wanting to see my pass. Luckily the idea came that though he could speak a little German, in all probability he could neither read German nor Serbian, and, indeed, maybe not Hungarian. He looked an illiterate sort of fellow. Very quietly I searched in my pockets and withdrew one of the papers given me by Major Popovitch.

I showed it just as if it were a military pass and all in order.

Rather to my surprise the man took it. If he

*could* read German then the fat was in the fire, for this paper was inscribed in French and had, of course, nothing whatever to do with the circumstance.

That sentry played his part right well! Very critically he looked over the certificate, apparently digesting every word—only, he held it upside down! Seriously enough he handed it back with a nod, and bade me report myself immediately at the Stadt Kommando. With a word of thanks for the moment's warmth, returning their salute, I passed along my way, breathing freely once again. It was impossible to knock at the hospital door, my hands were frozen with the cold—but Costa was on the lookout and during the next hour he patiently tended to them and tried to restore circulation. I learnt in a little measure the awful agony of frostbite.

## CHAPTER XIV

ONE evening I returned about eight o'clock from seeing a patient in the village. Milan was at the hospital and I wondered for a moment what his leering expression might portend. Angela and Pero were standing together; they looked half frightened and scurried into the kitchen. The reason was apparent when I reached my door. I had locked it when I left, now it stood open, the lock broken.

There was no need to ask questions. A large box of instruments had disappeared. I thought of some money which I had in a suit-case. The case had been prized open, the money was gone.

These were German methods.

There was nothing to do but grin and bear it. One realized very forcibly those days what it meant to be alone in the hands of the Germans. The "little Sea-girt Island" seemed very, very far away.

The town doctor had disappeared with the Serbian Army. He was an old man of sixty years or more, cutting a quaint bent-backed figure in his soldier's uniform. He left with his comrades, but was taken prisoner at Chachak.



The Austrians, wanting help at Uzsitsi, sent him back—and one day he appeared, in mufti and apparently perfectly happy under the new regime. He told me that Major Popovitch with his staff had trekked for Montenegro, and later he said that he had had certain news of their safe arrival.

Whether it was true I never knew nor did I ever learn how it was that this Serbian medical man came to be taken. Perhaps he could not keep up with his comrades, certainly he was far from being robust.

At any rate, he was sent back to Uzsitsi and again life seemed to go on pretty much the same for him, with his wife and children, in their home.

When he appeared on the scene I felt vastly relieved. In him I would find a colleague and a friend. He knew I had done what I could for the Serbs, that I had stayed by their wounded at no little personal risk when he himself had left with his comrades, stayed when a man, belonging to a neutral country, thought of his wife and saved his skin. Yes, the old Serb doctor would surely be an ally and a friend! One cannot realize the strange twists which can exist in human character until it has been studied under every conceivable condition.

I felt a little disappointed that his manner lacked some of that warmth which under the circumstances one almost expected.

Mine was a peculiarly isolated position for a woman and he knew it.

But this gentleman was a wise man in his generation. On the one hand, there were the conquerors of his country. It was their policy to treat him well—if he behaved as they desired he should. On the other hand, there was a stranger, a mere doctor woman, a prisoner of war. He had all to lose and nothing to gain should he befriend a Britisher and he decided on the wiser course.

If Milan was in the hospital he was placed there by the Austrians and the matter was wholly in their hands.

The Serb doctor could not and would not interfere—he, too, was at the mercy of the Army of Occupation, so he said. One piece of advice he gave me—and that was, that I had better give in and do what might be the will of the Germans and Austrians.

One day, when in one of the tiny shops which were still opened to the public, I saw a wooden box such as one sees with penny bars of chocolate. On the inside of the lid was the picture of a Union Jack with the name of a firm of sweet-meat manufacturers printed across. The very sight of it did me good. A few words with the salesman and the deed was done. I left the place with that wooden lid beneath my arm.

What spirit of mischief entered into me?

Life was not running very smoothly, I might have thought that to irritate our captors could only lead to trouble. But sometimes when a bully would intimidate he rouses his victim to action.

In pure defiance, in sheer delight, I nailed that badly drawn specimen of the old Flag on my door!

If the picture should be insulted—what was I to do? Then one would feel that one's indiscretion had allowed the Flag to be dishonoured—a nasty feeling to contemplate. But a curious thing happened.

That picture of our Flag was never touched. It met the eyes of the officers of the Kaiser's army every time they passed my door. Serb or German, Austrian or Hungarian, every man soon became familiar with the quaint device. England seemed very far away, but every time I caught sight of the Red, White and Blue it encouraged me and gave me a feeling of strength.

If I suffered our men were suffering things a thousand times still rougher—and it was worth going through it all—for the Empire and the King.

My rations from the officers' mess had fallen off. Sometimes I got food, sometimes I did not. Always it was poor in quality and very small in quantity.

I have spoken about the diphtheria epidemic. A few days before Christmas I sickened. There was scarcely any need to look at my throat! There is no mistaking that horrible feeling of

constriction. It was painful and, what was worse, I felt very, very ill.

For weeks I had seen children sicken and die. One little girl had coughed in my face—it was not strange that I should fall a victim.

To ask a favour from the C.M.O. was beyond me, it was useless to hope for help from any Serbian left in the vicinity. I looked round the wretched, dirty room—and wondered if the end had come at last.

It was no use giving in. I crawled round the wards. Infection was not a matter of serious consideration. The wounded had been taken out of my hands some weeks previously and the place was full of civilians. Men, women and children. Of the latter practically all had had the disease. Certainly there was no one in Uzsitsi who had not come into very close contact with it.

On Christmas Day my usual rations were not sent. I could not have eaten had an English repast been forthcoming, but as it was I was given no opportunity to have a meal even had I so desired.

I did have just one little treat. My tabloid tea-box was not quite empty—a little tepid water, a couple of the little dark pellets and lo, I had a beverage fit for the gods! In the afternoon I played with some of my little patients. There were a few apples, given me by a patient. I had those to give at least.

## CHAPTER XV

THE wounded Serbs had long ago been taken out of my charge. There was good reason that it should be so, the building was very far from being a satisfactory place for the treatment of serious surgical cases. In the village one of the school buildings had been whitewashed and turned into a temporary hospital—a decided improvement on the old Serbian one. The Austrian and German Red Cross arrangements appeared to me to be excellent, that is, absolutely the best obtainable under the circumstances and condition of the country. Once I managed to go in ostensibly to see one of my Austrian patients, in reality to get a sight, if possible, of some of the Serbs.

The patients were comfortable and the whole place clean, but I did not see my friends. The Austrians who had passed through my hands seemed glad to see me, and grateful for what I had done. One fellow had left me with tears in his eyes, and when he saw me he said that no matter how excruciating the pain might be that any man might suffer no narcotic was ever given by their doctors, and the long weary nights of



suffering were hours of agonizing tortures, the dread of which shook their courage and kept them full of horrible foreboding the livelong day.

One night I had already curled up on my boards and gone to sleep when I was roused by the tramp of men. Two officers and four soldiers entered my room, without so much as "by your leave."

The C.M.O. was evidently in one of his unpleasant after-dinner moods. I preferred him in such a state than in the condition in which he used too often to appear—at first, when he played his cards to try and fascinate. The subaltern looked ashamed of himself and ashamed of his errand, he was a lad of about nineteen with a boyish face and kindly eyes. We had seen each other once or twice in the street and he had always saluted me with grave courtesy. Now it was his duty to be the witness of things which, done in the name of the Kaiser, made him feel not only not proud of his Vaterland but ashamed and degraded.

I was held between two soldiers, while their fellows, at the instigation of the C.M.O., ransacked the room. Tables and chairs were flung on one side. Instruments, dressings and personal clothing were cast into canvas bags. Dr. Goldener was in his element, to rob a defenceless woman—and in such a manner—delighted his



small, mean soul. A certain Army tabloid case was not forthcoming and the envious soul of that medical man longed for its possession. With a bayonet held to my chest I was roughly sworn at and told to say where I had hidden the case.

Now it happened that day I had been to see a patient in the village and in a moment of forgetfulness the tabloid box had been left behind. However, I had no intention of letting the Germans think that they could force me to do their will and I told that little worm of a doctor that I would give him no information on the subject.

Every moment I expected his temper would outweigh discretion, and the bare cold steel do more than merely prick my skin.

There was nothing for it but to set my teeth and smile. If they meant to kill they must !

Whatever is . . . is written on the forehead. I was tasting a little of the enemy's methods that night.

It was no use demanding fair play. I was pushed this way, dragged that, threatened and bullied. I told them how interesting it was to *see* German culture.

If they had imagined what that little piece of wood, nailed on my door, stood for to me, it certainly would not have been allowed to remain

another minute ! They had not noticed or they had not grasped its import.

I looked at it, at the representation of our Flag, and I knew that though I stood there at the mercy of those men, that I had the better part.

I was shivering, standing bare-footed in my breeches (I never dared undress those days).

“So you thieves are afraid, afraid of one small British *woman*,” I said, and I added meditatively, that I wondered how many of them it would take to tackle a whole British *man*.

Those weeks had been good training ! To set their frightfulness at defiance, to laugh at their brutality (when practised on oneself) as at something contemptible, low and beneath one’s notice, and above all, never to give them the satisfaction of seeing one cowed and trembling ; to ignore their power, to disdain their methods, these were the ways which from first to last were the ones with which I determined to counter the intimidatory attacks of the Hun.

I had a fellow feeling those days with Fuzzy-Wuzzy, and, like that dear fellow, thought, if possible, they should not get a “ha’poth change off me.”

I smiled as I went into the wards next day. Underneath a sick man’s head lay a rucksack of mine—his only pillow. That at least was left me. I complained at Headquarters of the bare-

faced robbery, demanding a receipt for my surgical appliances. The Oberst was courteous but firm. He could not or would not interfere.

I think he—a Hungarian—dared not interfere with the Austro-German element.

I reminded him that such treatment was not in accordance with the Geneva Convention.

His reply was characteristic :

I was told to remember “ There is no Geneva Convention now.”

Another Scrap of Paper set aside !

## CHAPTER XVI

OF course there had been cholera, and I had had from time to time Serbian or enemy wounded, but, for the most part, since the Occupation, my hospital had been full of civilian patients—men, women and children. Among these I had worked contentedly enough. Then came a day when a different class of patient presented themselves. Men, the riff-raff of the Army of Occupation—evil, diseased men, were sent to me. It was a mean underhand trick against a woman prisoner. It was not until the second day that I grasped the evil ingenuity of this Kultur trick. And since no power on earth would make me clean up the filthiness of the German-Austrian Army, I sat in my room and refused to work.

Each day relations between the C.M.O. and myself became more and more strained. My mascot, on the door, often served to cheer me. It encouraged me, and things sometimes looked very, very black, but that silly little advertisement often gave me courage !

Alone ? At the mercy of fiends ? But I stood there—for England. And “ England expects . . . ”

It sounds melodramatic *now*, but it was a very real thing then.

How was it all going to end ?

I dared not pause to think. I had not a friend in the place. Death was the least of possible evils.

Again I went to the Kommando and held him to the promise—made soon after his arrival—a promise that I should be allowed to return to England after the first pressure of work was over.

I scarcely expected any result, and certainly I never foresaw that which came to pass !

At five o'clock next morning, it seemed like the middle of the night, there was a commotion in the hall. Now, there was one page in my diary in which I had written, shortly, things which might do me no good if they fell into the hands of the enemy. Certainly the words were hard to decipher, but one knows that there is nothing like the ingenuity of the devil—and I did not doubt his spawn would find a way to read the meaning of certain hieroglyphics !

There is a wonderful power which, under the right conditions, becomes strangely developed in some individuals. It is the *sense* of personal danger. A sudden fore-knowledge that death is lurking by one's elbow, albeit quite invisible, and while, to all appearances, life is proceeding in its usual way.

I was often disturbed at night. Sudden calls to fight for someone's life, or wakened to face

the strange malignancy of German Kultur, but through all alarms the same strange premonition had never yet assailed me. In a second, I had seized the book, torn out the page, soaked it in the last remaining drop of ether, pushed it in the stove—a match—and soldiers entered !

The stove door was closed, I was yawning sleepily. The N.C. Officer ordered me to dress. I scrambled into boots and collar—he held out my coat. There was a bullock cart at the door drawn by a pair of stout Hungarian horses. I was marched down to it and told to sit on the floor. Two men with bayonets fixed mounted as well. The sergeant sat on the driver's seat facing his prisoner, the other gathered the reins and we started off.

All day long we drove across the snow-clad mountains. It grew bitterly cold. As far as the eye could reach was a region of virgin whiteness, untouched for the most part by foot of man or beast. Across the hills came the shrill blasts of icy winds, cutting into our human flesh with the nicety of fine sharp knives. The intense silence of a Polar winter was unbroken save for the rumbling of our ungainly vehicle, the shouting of the driver and the straining of the cattle.

The road was in a desperate condition. It had never been much more than a mountain track. It had seen the passage of armies and had borne the heavy weight of much artillery. Trees had



been felled to fill up great gaps—here and there some forest monarch had been blown across our path, but after much struggling, much swearing of the men, and some exertion we seemed to overcome such difficulties and still be ploughing onward.

About midday we stopped on the ledge of a beautiful plateau to rest and breathe the horses. The men descended and soon were bivouacking round a fire warming their little tins of bully-beef and preparing their rations of bread.

As far as I was concerned not a scrap of food was forthcoming and not a drop of coffee had passed my lips that morning.

To move was agony, but I knew the best thing was to try and restore the circulation. I half scrambled, half rolled out of the vehicle, crawled to my knees, got on my feet and began to stamp along. It was a painful business and all one's nature called out to get back, lie down and die.

However, it *had* to be done, and I stamped a few yards further.

Whiz!—A bullet almost grazed my head.

Whiz!—another ploughed a furrow in the snow two inches from my feet. This was no joke.

I wheeled round, holding up my hands. The men had just become aware that I was out of the cart. They had had their orders—and told me that *I must stay where I was put* and must not move. If I attempted to do so—they would shoot.

I told them to aim straight another time. The sergeant was a kindly little man. Hungarian like his fellows. He explained that they were *to lame me, not to kill, if I attempted to move out of their sight*. He said I was charged with espionage—a fact which I did not believe.

Soon we were on our way again. The cold grew more and more intense. The great service coat seemed as if it were lifted off my shoulders by invisible hands; the wind cut through each layer of clothes unhampered by material, biting, nipping, at first making one's flesh shiver, tingling and burning, then to grow numb, dead, until one was gripped with the iron hand of indescribable cold, every muscle drawn with cramp and, seemingly, the heart's blood frozen solid in one's veins. Icy fingers gripped one's ears, my feet were frozen logs of wood.

The pain grew almost beyond bearing. From time to time the men descended to run or walk or to extract us from some perilous position.

During that long day the monotony was broken once.

We were wending our way slowly up a great precipitous hillside track when we came upon two figures sitting by the roadside. They were Russian soldiers—extraordinary apparitions to be seen there, alone and so far from everywhere. They were unarmed, *that* told its own tale. But it is not usual for prisoners to be floating about

the country on their own. My escort stopped. One Russian, a fine-looking fellow, wearing his battle-worn uniform with an air that proved him to be no mere peasant, turned to the sergeant before the slow brains of the latter had grasped the situation.

“How far is it to Pozega?”

But the young man had to answer questions, not to ask them!

The Russian spoke German fluently and well. He explained his presence there to the satisfaction of the sergeant.

“Sir,” he said, pointing up the sharp narrow mountain track, “there my comrades come and our escort. We two were allowed to cut across the hill. There are five hundred Russian prisoners.” Then having convinced my guard he turned to me, “English?”

It was a handshake which meant something! We were brethren in distress. He was going to a life worse than a political exile’s in Siberia, he had a black, hopeless, weary future—away from friends, away from those he loved, with the coarsest food at a premium, with a daily round of uncongenial, hard, manual labour. These five hundred Russian prisoners were on their way to Pozega, to be set to work upon the roads and much-needed sanitation.

Prisoner, unless an exchange were effected, until the end of the war!—That many a thousand

are in like case does not make the fact more easy for oneself.

We had never seen each other before. Like ships that pass in the night we met, and spoke, and passed on our different ways, but we did not meet as strangers. His face clouded as he looked at me and he spoke with real concern.

“Are you wounded?”

With few words I put him in possession of such facts as I knew myself. Espionage? He looked grave.

But the escort were impatient. We had spoken loud enough for them to hear each word and in German. Now the waggon creaked and swayed. We were off.

“God be with you,” said the lad, and our hands met in one firm grasp. His friend took my other . . . then suddenly they raised them to their lips. Slowly we wound up the hill. Looking down we could see my friends where we had left them. Now they were joined by several of their comrades and two or three of their Austrian guard. The Russians were gesticulating and were looking up towards us. We had to breathe the horses and stopped a minute. Up from below came a mighty shout, “Vive English! Bravo Lady! Vive la Russie!”

And I called back, “Vive la Russie!” but the little sergeant was angry, and the sentence tailed off as my shoulders were roughly shaken.



ENDORSEMENTS

Abgemeldet zur Reise nach  
Belgrad -

K. u. K. Kreiskommando  
in Uzs.



Uzs., am 07. 1916.

Glimmer

Signature on Dr. Matthews' passport of the Hungarian Commander at  
Uzsitsi, authorising her journey to Belgrade.



## CHAPTER XVII

Now, the bottom of a peasant's bullock cart is not the cosiest place in the world, and it was six o'clock before we drew up at a village.

The Stadt Kommando was ill and he interviewed me from his bed. A great burly man, he was not unkindly but, rather, seemed annoyed at having anything to do with the business. It was in his room that I learnt officially for the first time that I was being sent to Belgrade, to Graf von Salis, the Governor, being charged with espionage. While the old man glanced at me in a kindly ferocious manner, an officer entered and reported that a telegram had been received from Uzsitsi with reference to the English spy. Then, to my great chagrin, at a sign from his chief the young man delivered the rest of the message in Hungarian and I was none the wiser.

The room allotted me was at the inn and indescribably filthy, the bed matched the room and had seen much service. The window would not open and the smell was worse than that of a merely fetid atmosphere.

An officer entered, introducing himself with well-bred courtesy.

“ Doctor Count von —, Fräulein.”

He was a soldier and he had his orders, but he was an Austrian gentleman, too well bred to have been influenced by German Kultur, and he did not like his errand. In the telegram, which had been received from Uzsi, it was urged that I should be sent on with a stronger escort, that I was an important capture and must be *searched to the skin* !

I was an enemy, but I was a woman, and the little officer expressed his regret that a colleague should be in such dire straits. . . .

That night about eleven o'clock he came again. The awful cold had done its work. I was ill, with rigors, sickness and very considerable pain. Food was out of the question, save for a cup of warm milk.

The Oberst and this little C.M.O., both of them Hungarians, were honourable, courteous foes. They forbade my removal. Cold and want of food will play havoc with the toughest. I lay all day on that wretched pallet, too collapsed to care whether the army of bugs and lice made me their happy hunting-ground or not.

The little Count strode up and down the room, biting his moustache. It went against his conscience to send a colleague—and that a woman—to such a fate. He and the Oberst had paid me a visit and we had discussed the situation.

Did they believe me to be a spy ?

Neither would commit himself, but they told me that there was not a doubt in the charge laid against me, and that the position in which I stood was very perilous. Would I have to pay the penalty ?

The Oberst gave me one of his keen looks. "There will be no hope in Belgrade."

I thanked him, and since they were both distressed I begged them believe that the news was not wholly unpleasant.

At least, they argued, we might put off the evil day. I might remain there—for a few days—*ill*.

But I did not fall in with this kindly plot. Would they not rather face bullets than the hordes of vermin in that room ? Besides, I reminded them, they must make their report to Uzsitsi, and not for worlds would I have it hinted that perhaps I was malingering and was afraid.

I thanked them. A good, honest, honourable enemy is not to be despised.

Even if the Germans knew the meaning of that word "honour" this war might still continue, but oh, the difference it would make in the world ! A fair, straight fight, without the bitterness engendered, without the deeds which have stained the name of "man."

The next day we started again on what seemed like an interminable journey. This time the lumbering cart was drawn by four great horses and my escort was increased to six.

## CHAPTER XVIII

WE had nearly a day to wait at Mladinovatz Station. The officers' waiting-room was closed to me. I was made to stay with various soldiers : Magyars, Roumanian, Hungarian and Austrian, in the shed they used.

A Polish soldier began to tell me of his hatred for the Russian, his love for the German. He was a mad enthusiast, a mistaken Idealist, and his eyes flashed fire as he related the sorrows of his poor beloved land.

There were Russian prisoners about the station, some were working in gangs on the railway.

The Army of the Central Powers had no sooner come into occupation than they started improving the railway lines—and there was plenty of improvement possible, for the Serbian train service was exceedingly slow and exceedingly poor in every detail. Prisoners of war were everywhere working under the Hun—laying new lines, renewing old, tinkering up here. . . . For the most part these compulsory workers were Russian. At least I never saw any other, but I was told by several soldiers that a number of Italian prisoners were also drafted to the same work in different places.

One of the Austrian officers, with whom I came in contact at Uzsitsi, pooh-poohed the idea that "England" ever had a chance of winning in this war. "*We* hold the railways of Europe," he said proudly. "How long will it take you English to get troops round to Salonica? A week or longer!

"In less than two days we can draft troops from the Western to the Eastern Front, from North to South. Our system is perfect. France during all these years has lagged behind, and Russia. . . . This war is with you, it's a war to death between Germany and England, and some day," so he went on, "I shall meet you in England, and then you will remember what I have said and you will have learnt what it means—we hold the railways and in the railways we hold the key of the war."

"And we hold the sea," I replied, but I saw his reasoning, and knew that there is a little truth in it, in so far that the master of the railway network has a power to wield. Then I remembered our unpreparedness—and I knew that England will win.

The enemy were not in Uzsitsi for many weeks before a new line was discussed. I was told they had begun it, a line which was to run direct to Belgrade.

Some of the Russians at Mladinovatz were employed in cleaning the offices and waiting-

rooms. One had passed through into the officers' room several times. Finally he drew near and began to enter into conversation with the Pole, but his eyes sought mine. Finally he spoke.

"English?"

"Prejatel!" ("Friend!")

Before the guard could interfere our hands had met.

We were strangers, prisoners, and one of us was being taken to her death.

Alas, my knowledge of Serbian is small, my knowledge of Russian is nil, but the former is very much like the latter and a few words passed between us.

Could he help me, that is what he wanted to know—his tone was significant. Just then the guard came. I was curtly told to sit on a bench at the further end of the room and the Russian was ordered out. He demurred, having the right to be in the room because of his work—but our enemies were masters and he was forced to obey.

Presently other Russians passed through. I saw my friend pass up along the line, presently the gangs of men at work drew nearer the station.

My man came through the room again, carrying a lamp for the officers' room—which opened out of the place we were in. I had seen him coming through the window and, pretending to be sleepy, I changed my seat again and stretched



myself out on a bench near which I judged he would pass.

He came, and—he slipped ! In a moment he had recovered himself, but he had spoken low, very low, and unnoticed by the guard :

“ We’ll help you ! ”

Weren’t they fine fellows ?

My sergeant told everyone he saw that I was an English doctor, that he was escorting me to Belgrade—a dangerous prisoner, a British spy—to pay the penalty of such.

The case looked fairly desperate and my Russian friends did not doubt that I was being taken to my execution. If I made a bolt for it I am sure they meant to harass the soldiers, to do what they could to help me.

An utterly hair-brained scheme, but I am sure that is what they meant. Unobserved I signed to them—No ! Even had such a madcap plan been feasible, which it most certainly was not, it would have been taking my liberty at the price of their lives.

My new friend wanted to help me, it was not an easy matter. Where there’s a will there’s a way, and if I would not take the risk he and his comrades were willing to run, he could at least help me in another way, and he did. He disappeared ; we saw him no longer ; my escort began to settle down again—they had, since the “ Dobra Dan ” episode, been as fussy as hens with a

duckling. The sergeant grew tired of keeping an indefinite watch. I saw him speak to some Red Cross men, evidently telling them to keep their eye on me, not to let me move, and then he left the shed.

The Russians were on the watch, my friend entered again. He sat down for a moment on a bench a little distance from me. Then, with perfect *sang-froid*, he crossed over. He stood for a moment cap in hand, and handed me a little newspaper parcel. I guessed what it was by the feel and thanked him, he bowed and went out, unwilling evidently to risk having speech.

I expected the Red Cross men to interfere, but they said nothing, and I lay down pretending to sleep.

Presently my sergeant came in, and he was soon made aware of the incident.

He came up to me much annoyed and flustered.

"That Russian handed you a parcel," he said. "Where is it and what is it?"

"It is chocolate, Sergeant. I would like to have it, but not if you will get into trouble."

The stupid little man turned it over in his hand. He knew I was starving, that the gift was a real godsend that day, and finally he gave in.

"Right, but—do not say a word about it. I ought not to allow it."

It sounds a very simple incident told here in London, but the action of that Russian soldier

was one of the most beautiful things of which I have ever heard.

Food was at no time too plentiful in Serbia—not even with the soldiers of Occupation—prisoners naturally fared even worse, a little black bread, some soup and, occasionally, coffee;—I don't know whether there was sugar at Mladinovatz, certainly there was none at Uzitsi, and for prisoners at the former place there was certainly none to spare.

I don't know where he had got the chocolate; maybe he and his comrades had clubbed together. I do know it must have been a most fearful price. The condition of the Russian prisoner in Serbia is not enviable, the commissariat is very, very bad. To part with chocolate was to part with something really valuable.

It was a generous, kingly gift.

Oh yes, there were times when things went very roughly, when one suffered physical hardships and indignities which even at the time seemed almost unreal, but, in spite of all, occasionally there came a great compensation. To meet that big-souled stranger was one of the greatest. A Russian soldier in a torn, frayed uniform, looking dirty and ill-kept, wretchedly ill-fed and tired—yet he forgot himself to help his country's friend—and, remember, I was a marked person—a spy. It was no sane thing to defy the enemy and boldly show me kindness.

This lad never stopped to weigh the penalty *he* might have to pay. Is it often that we meet such characters? I think not.

At 5 p.m. my friend came in again, this time with two others.

Without a word they walked straight past the armed guard—but they did not turn towards the inner room.

They stood before me and my friend was the first to speak. Just one word—for all the world to hear :

“Sbogom!” (“God be with you!”)

He held my hand and looked me bravely, sincerely in the eyes. “Sbogom!” he said again, “Russia thanks you, comrade.”

I had no money, and I longed to give him some little thing. I had one little piece of jewellery which had escaped the eyes of the Hun. To hand a wedding ring to a man sounds easy enough, but there are difficulties when that man is a stranger and does not expect it, when many sharp eyes are watching your every movement and detection would spell death. The Russian did not realize at first that I was trying to pass him something, and between us the ring nearly fell on the floor. It was an awful moment! Let but a look, or the slightest movement betray us, and it would have meant short shrift for us both!

But the ring was all I had to give. It might mean food—and food means life.

## CHAPTER XIX

To look back upon that time is to look back upon a nightmare. The sergeant and his men were Magyars, not Germans, else my plight would have been even more desperate than it was. They obeyed the orders which had been given to the letter, but, at the same time, the sergeant showed such civility as lay in his power. He was answerable for my life with his, besides, his orders were concise, the prisoner was not to be allowed out of their sight, not *for a moment*, until safely handed over to the officials at Belgrade.

We arrived at Valjevo in the dusk of one wet bleak evening. Creaking along in the mud, we saw the village in the distance. The wind had shifted slightly and the rain was coming down in a fine small drizzle. I was soaked, cold and hungry—one might say “ill”—but it was not the time for such a luxury.

How often had we looked out from the dining-tent of the S.W.H. on the everlasting panorama of the hills, days when the clouds chased each other over the distant heights or came together drawing deep grey curtains before the view,



hiding all, then opening out, an ever-varying, ever-changing picture.

To the right was the wireless station and the neighbouring hills on which we had encamped during those long summer months.

I saw the wooden huts still standing which the Scottish had expected to make their winter quarters. So they had not destroyed them. I wondered where my fellow-countrywomen were, the brave little C.M.O. who had been so wonderfully kind to the stranger at her gates, the Administrator who had shown me a thousand kindnesses those days when I was a guest within their camp. Where were even the two V.A.D.'s who saw me off from Valjevo, by whose unselfish forethought I set out well equipped and with a good supply of rations for my journey?

How strange the town looked. The greater number of the shops were shut. There were no happy groups of peasants. The difference, the alteration in the character of the inhabitants was very much more marked than at Uzsitsi.

We rattled over the cobble stones in Valjevo : the place seemed deserted. There by the river I had seen the cattle fair and the musician seated by the bridge chanting to his gusler, even in that poor country reaping a good harvest of small coins. Now there was scarcely a civilian to be seen, but Austrian soldiers—men in the grey-blue uniform, were here, there and



everywhere. Again and again we were challenged by a sentry.

We passed the little shop where I used to meet my friends and partake of great plates of the delicious "soured milk"—the place was closed, there was no sign of the clean old man, the proprietor, whose sons were serving in the Serbian Army and whose pride in his lads had been so very touching.

Then we came to a standstill. My escort were strangers in the place and there were the usual formalities to be gone through, the usual officials to be seen.

A civilian came out of a small house, he looked at the waggon and saw the khaki figure—the armed escort. Another look! He was a friend of the summer, and recognized me—for the moment he seemed as if he would speak, but then he thought better of it. It was so apparent that I was not being brought into the village, a strictly guarded prisoner, for no apparent reason. He scented trouble, and like a wise man, determined to keep out of it. Words were not necessary. His look told me that I had his sympathy. It was over, that mutual recognition, in a moment, and with a glance of horror, of fear, he fled down the street. My guards had not noticed the fellow's hesitation, their powers of observation were not highly developed, but they wanted to know the way and civilian passers-by

were few and far between. They started towards the man just as he turned. I think their evident movement toward him was the last straw—he did not wish to share my place, so he ran and a couple of soldiers ran after him, pell-mell, till he turned hastily down into a little side path, through a door and into a house.

The soldiers were amused, perhaps they would have hunted the Serb even into the cottage, but a small boy came along and they tackled him.

At length we were at the Stadt Kommando. We had to wait some time for the necessary papers; the officials gave me a chair by the stove, and one, an Austrian, brought out his cigarette-case. A smoke was better than nothing and I took one. It was quite dark by now and we went off to interview another officer—this time with reference to my quarters for the night. He was a man about forty, hatchet-faced, dark moustache, with an exceedingly high collar and many orders on his breast. He was an Austrian, stiff and uncomfortable between collar and corsets.

I was marched in and stood before his desk, a guard on either side. He spoke English. After looking at me in a most impertinent way, he asked :

“ *What have you done ?* ”

“ A good many things—and you ? ” I spoke in German.

He was angry. Up went his eyeglass.

"Why are you sent here like this? What have you been up to?"

"Why I am sent I do not know—but I suppose it's the Austro-German way to make war on women under the Red Cross."

He did not keep me long, but he made several nasty remarks.

Then my little sergeant got the papers and we started off again.

We passed the building where the S.W.H. had held an entertainment in aid of Serbia's wounded.

By George! Things had changed since those days!

We were quartered at the Grand Hotel. Now the proprietor knew me, his staff knew me, for I had stayed some time under the roof and had been in the habit of entertaining my friends there. Sometimes we would dine there in the evening, sometimes we would run in for a cup of coffee during some little expedition in the village.

The man's face was a picture when he saw me.

"Dobra Dan," I said cheerfully, putting out my hand.

But the whisper had already gone forth. A spy!

He looked at my guards and stood there a picture of misery, wringing his hands.

"Oh, it is dreadful. It is dreadful," he cried,

and I was chevied into a room with his refrain ringing in my ears.

I didn't want to eat. I was past that, but I knew I *must*, there was no one to pamper me there !

I spoke to my sergeant and told him he must get me something to eat. The proprietor came to the door. I asked him to bring me some milk, coffee, anything. He refused, saying he had none in the house, an obvious lie.

He was a Serb, that man, and the British were his Country's Allies. Certainly, had he offered to bring me a little milk, I do not think my escort would have raised objections.

It did seem rather heartless, but, 'after all, German methods have a way of making cowards of the bravest and cowing the timid into ungenerous, unworthy acts.

The sergeant bestirred himself. A soldier was sent to the officers' mess—he returned with a slice of hard, tasteless, leathery mutton and a small piece of bread. It was rough fare, especially when one's whole internal arrangements have been upset, half frozen and starved.

About 1 a.m. the N.C.O. shook me, and he had to shake hard before I woke. I had slept for about an hour and found it no easy matter to pull myself together, to realize where I was and to prepare for another continuation of that horrible journey.

The rain had passed and the stars were out in all their glorious beauty, the air was fresh and biting. Two soldiers took me to the railway station. There I was taken into the guard room. It was an experience that a woman may not often have, one among a crowd of soldiers—soldiers of Kaiser William, soldiers of the Dual Monarchy. There were only a few of the former; they kept to themselves in a corner. The room was crowded, the benches round the walls each held its complement of weary men. They slept on the tables, they slept under the tables, they lay on the floor. There was a big stove in the room, a Magyar sitting in front of it curled up on his haunches, put on wood from time to time. A window had been broken, and through it came in a fresh breath of air.

At first I sat on a bench, but fatigue was overpowering. A man made room on the floor and I lay there among these men—enemies to England. One time I woke to find another head sharing my rucksack, but we were so crowded that it was impossible to claim more than enough space on which to stretch to one's full length. A great deal of chatter went on in many varied dialects, a little rough horse-play, first here, then there, whilst every now and then soldiers would enter and, joyful at being off duty, fling down their accoutrements and then settle down with sighs of content, while another set of men would



buckle on their belts, grasp their rifles and go out grumbling to their posts.

The train at last !

We mounted a horse-box with several other soldiers—my home for the next few hours. A horse-box on a cold dark winter's morning is not a very cosy place, more especially when the window shutters are broken and one sliding door refuses to close.

War experience is bought—at a price !

About nine o'clock we descended—again we had to wait for a while, and the “ spy ” was the cynosure of all eyes.

Arrangements had to be made for the accommodation of such a prisoner on the incoming train. It was not fitting that such a person should be allowed to mix with innocent folk ! The staff in the telegraph room were kindly enough, one offered me a chair by the stove, saying in an apologetical tone to his fellows that the “ English Sister ” looked ill. I had learnt to value such kindly acts.

Finally, it was decided that I and my sergcant should travel with the railway employees, in the compartment reserved for them next to the engine. It was not for a spy to be placed with honest folk.

We had just started when an officer entered. He was Austrian—a doctor. He spoke to the sergcant, saying something I did not hear. Later



on I was told he had asked permission to give me a packet of chocolate. The new-comer was a man in authority and the N.C.O. dared not refuse—even had he wished. Then the doctor turned to me—with a parcel in his hand.

“Please take this chocolate,” he said. “I wish I could get you something hot. I wish I could help you. I am very, very sorry. . . .” He saluted and held out his hand. I took it, and thanked him rather, I think, by my looks than by any word I said.

I was physically worn out, tired and cold—perhaps that was why that man’s courteous generosity touched me so deeply. During the whole time I was in the hands of the enemy never once had I felt a desire to cry. When they bullied it simply angered me, when things seemed very near the Last Scene of All I merely felt a certain satisfaction in having thwarted them of ever seeing fear in English eyes. But that kindly action of a brother doctor, his generous thought for a woman he believed to have definitely injured his Fatherland, touched a chord that I thought had long since grown too hard to respond to any stimulus. It was with difficulty that I blinked back my tears.

Perhaps one ought to be ashamed of having felt so weak—but it was only momentary. Self-restraint was reasserted almost as soon as it failed.

## CHAPTER XX

It was 1 a.m.

The capital at last !

The train steamed slowly into Belgrade Station. The platforms were crowded with a seething mass of great bronzed, helmeted men. They were hurrying here and there in droves, men of brute strength, muscular fellows of the German Army. Now and then a deep-voiced order rang out above the din, to be obeyed with machine-like promptitude.

Curious glances were cast at the one odd Britisher standing alone with the everlasting sergeant, his bayonet well in evidence. Presently I heard the words "English spy" passed from mouth to mouth.

The last few days had been somewhat trying, to be starved and cold is a tax on one's physical strength, besides, it had been many nights since I had known even a fairly good sleep, undisturbed and wholesome.

The sight of those great strong men woke me up. Their physique attracted me—they had been drilled and worked upon until they were each a typical muscular brute. Science had been brought to bear on every ounce of muscle, every iota of strength.

Well, I stood there, alone in the fallen city. There was only one Britisher, but they should see she would not be intimidated.

Whenever a prisoner arrives in a place there are countless formalities to be gone through. My little N.C.O. was making his arrangements, reporting to some official, *vis-à-vis* to me was a very tall burly German captain with great broad shoulders and far above the average in height. He had found the usual beer-mug too small and stood quaffing from a great enamel basin.

Suddenly our eyes met. He was like a roguish school-boy as he laughed a huge guffaw. Merri-ment is infectious.

"You are a very little enemy," he said.

"The Jerboa and the Kangaroo," I answered, with a laugh. . . .

Then I was hustled off by my guard to get our military railway passes stamped according to requirements. I was made to wait outside the office of the Station Kommando, with a great crowd of soldiers pushing and jostling on every side. Inside, through the glass doors, one could see the German officials lounging about in comfort, doing their business at their leisure. Outside, the place was a perfect pandemonium, but as gold-laced individuals went in and out the men hastily made way for them. I attempted to speak to the apparently least offensive, much-bemedalled "Herr," but he merely looked me

up and down as if I were a specimen of the insect tribe, made a sign to my escort—who jerked me back a yard—and went calmly on his way—a Gentleman of Kultur !

Then the men began some horse-play and my sergeant dared not or would not interfere. Nearly swept off my feet I struggled till I got next to the wall—and then I stood with my back against it—their enemy at bay.

The time seemed interminably long. A different temperament would have collapsed. But that was not the place for any weakness.

Later on I was taken into a waiting-room while the sergeant arranged some business in connection with our papers. I was cross-questioned gruffly, certainly the men who spoke forgot they were addressing a woman. Their acquaintances who know them in drawing-rooms would have been surprised to see their lack of ordinary civility.

At a table in the further corner of the room were two ladies. They seemed to be with some German officers, but there was no mistaking their type. They were speaking English, and I could just catch a word or two, and they looked at me curiously, whispering together. I think they were American. They could see I was British as I stood there in my khaki service coat. They wore the Red Cross badge, but even a woman absolutely untrained in hospital ways

could scarcely have failed to see the stranger was desperately weary.

Besides, the Hun officials did not lower their voices, it was apparent that they were enjoying the pastime of badgering an English woman.

Those women (I hope not fellow-country-women) were partaking of refreshment. Looking back, one cannot help being surprised that simple humanity did not move them to say a word of cheer, or, at least, to try, and of their charity, to give a drink to the girl whose appearance must have betrayed her hungry, cold, tired condition.

All things bad and good—save one—come to an end, and at last we were striding up this street, walking up that.

Near the railway the Austrian bombardment had made a fearful havoc of the ground. My guard plunged in, above his knees in mud, made a desperate effort to save himself, and fell. Then for the first time I heard choice Hungarian swear words from his lips. He picked himself up, threw me my rucksack and bade me hurry. There was nothing else for it. I picked the thing up and scrambled along.

There was not a vehicle to be seen, and even if there had been such things are luxuries beyond the ken of prisoners. Had there ever been a time when I loved to travel, when I would arrive at stations in the middle of the night, and the long cab drive to the hotel be part of the pleasure?



There was never a sign of life in the town save for sentries posted here and there and some patrols which passed us in the streets. Of civilians at such an hour there was not one to be seen, even marauding cats were conspicuous by their absence.

In time we arrived at the Stadt Kommando. That gentleman was having a last cigarette over a voluminous correspondence. The orders given to the sergeant at Uzsitsi were precise. He was to take the prisoner straight to the Governor at Belgrade. He was only capable of doing what he had been told, it did not dawn upon his consciousness to give his intelligence a little exercise. He had got me as far as the old Serbian capital, inside that capital resided the man to whom he had to report himself plus prisoner all safe and sound. His limited mind could not grasp the fact that perhaps Graf von Salis would prefer to continue his sleep at such a very early hour.

The N.C.O. argued—his orders were . . . and he *must* take me, there and then, to Government House. The Stadt Kommando swore. What on earth would the Governor do with a prisoner at that hour of day? In fact, it was more than possible he might not consider it a pleasure to be awakened even to interview a notorious spy. Mein Herr's wrath arose, and hard words were shouted at my luckless guard.



Off we went to more officials. In the room there was the usual paraphernalia of such places, littered desks and so on, but there were, in addition, two beds and in each bed a potential winner of the Iron Cross.

In the middle of a few forcible expletives the sleepy senior officer opened his eyes and saw something resembling an English uniform. He woke up with a suddenness which to all appearances was foreign to his nature.

They both woke, blinking and rubbing their eyes, when it dawned upon them that it was no mere man within that khaki coat.

“What is *that*?” exclaimed one, pointing at me with shaking finger. I think he thought it was another nightmare.

The sergeant was standing at my elbow, his back like a ramrod, his bayonet fixed. In the presence of his superiors he dared not interfere.

It was time to have a word and I explained shortly that I was an English prisoner and I wanted quarters for the night—or what was left of it!

They were young men and they were vulgar, in fact they were just typical German officials. Their room was an index to their characters. The walls were decorated with objectionable post-cards—pictures which would have been better in the W.P.B. Their questions and remarks are better not repeated.

Fur began to fly.

The entrance of an old General was a timely interruption: he came stumping into the room literally bursting with rage, and was spluttering about his business (which had nothing to do with me) in the intolerant, fierce way those people have, when he turned and saw me standing there. I don't think he was quite sure whether the Englishwoman was real flesh and blood or a creation of an imagination inflamed by after-dinner wine. . . .

At last my quarters were arranged—at a very second-rate hotel. Then the sergeant began to fluster again. He wanted a new guard, with the exception of himself the rest of my escort had disappeared. The Central Powers act with automatic precision. The men were to accompany me so far—no further.

The General turned on the man, the two sleepy officials rounded on him. They were not going to be bothered arranging a guard. The prisoner could not fly away, they said. To escape from the window in my room would have been impossible even if I had had the wish (which I had not) and there was a soldier downstairs at the door.

Nevertheless, the last thing I saw that night was my silly little Hungarian standing on guard in my room. It was with a certain satisfaction that I closed my eyes. He too was tired although

he had been travelling under better conditions and getting his daily rations.

Dressing in the morning had become a very simple matter. Coat, collar, boots; maybe—sometimes not—a splash of water on my face. Solemnly and awkwardly the sergeant acted as valet.

At an early hour we mounted the steps at Government House.

A graceful, handsome young fellow in a black uniform and spurs showed me into a waiting-room, leaving the N.C.O. outside the door.

“You are charged with espionage,” he said in very perfect English. “That is very bad. What can I do for you?”

My new friend spoke with very real concern, in well-bred, courteous tones. He was that rare, very rare species, an ally of the Huns who still retained chivalrous respect for Womanhood.

I told him that it did not matter, that he need not trouble to do anything, at the same time I thanked him.

He made a gesture of horror.

He did not think I realized my position! According to the sergeant’s account the evidence was damnatory.

“*It is war*, and the penalty——”

The chivalrous young officer did not finish the sentence, his gesture was more expressive than words. Then he left me, repeating that he would

see the General and do what he could to straighten matters out.

Certainly he was taking matters far more seriously than I had done.

Then there was another hour or two of waiting.

To be a prisoner of war is to learn *how to wait*!

I began to wonder if my unknown German friend was right. Did I realize my position?

Would it ever be known in England if I were shot? I regretted for a moment that I had not spoken to the two English-speaking Red Cross women at the station. But I could not have acted in any other way. Perhaps they were afraid to speak to me. It was not for me to bring them into touch with anything unpleasant, perhaps dangerous for themselves. It would have taken a stout heart to range itself on the side of a friendless soul at the mercy of the enemy. Even to have spoken one kind word might have drawn the wrath of those standing near upon their own heads. No, I felt glad that they had passed me by and were themselves no worse for having been in contact.

Of one thing I felt convinced, and I still rightly think so. It is, that the objectionable C.M.O. at Uzsitsi was at the bottom of my troubles. . . . I began to wish I had asked that friendly Austrian to use his influence for a good breakfast to be given me, and the means to start out warm, if I had to face the music! One always

reads that spies are shot at dawn ! At least, I remembered it was so in those stories of adventure which I used to read in my madcap days of youth.

What if one shivered with cold ? The possibility of this idea impressed itself upon my imagination. The being shot was a secondary consideration, the ghastly fear of *shivering* was the fact that filled me with a curious dread. It went so against the grain to let the Germans think they had the power to frighten one ! And I was so cold, the want of food, the months without fats and sugar, were having their revenge. . . . At the last moment . . . facing the rifles . . . would I be seized with a new sensation of unaccountable fear ? Were the few kindly hearts who had shown me such real sympathy—the Russians, the Austrian doctor, this officer—were they right ?

Was death such a terrible thing ? But the physical pain would be over in a moment and it's that that one fears. I wondered, at the last moment, would I learn the meaning of physical Fear ?—After all, how is one to be sure of the effect of an absolutely new experience ? It was only a momentary thought and gone in a flash. The whole time I was in German hands, as their treatment grew more and more ungenerous, I grew more and more determined that they should never have the desired-for satisfaction of seeing fear in British eyes. . . .



## CHAPTER XXI

THERE were three men at the table—officials who, by the quantity of gold lace upon their uniforms and the number of orders on their breasts, were of no mean rank.

I stood before them.

Was this the last scene but one of the unexpected Drama ?

The sergeant delivered up the packet containing all the scraps of paper found upon me, with documents and letters from head-quarters at Uzsitsi.

He gave his report briefly and to the point, then stepped back.

An old officer, with grey imperial, started the ball. They knew all about me. *All that file of papers were reports which they had received from time to time concerning my doings !*

They knew all things I had ever done. In fact his manner was so impressive that had he told me he had a record of all the thoughts that I had ever thought, it is possible I might have conceived that he spoke the truth !

His hand lay on the papers—foolscap standing a couple of inches high—and my eyes were



fascinated by them. They were reports concerning me ! But people who bluff should play their game in every detail ! Those documents looked very legal, very terrifying to my little feminine mind—but *they had never yet been folded !*

What was he saying ?

Confession alone could help me ? What information was I taking to England ? What had I been doing down in Uzsiitsi ?

I saw the humorous side—and smiled ! They had been assuring me of their knowledge, *they knew everything*. What did they want to know—if they knew ?

The old man smiled back in sympathy. Evidently he thought me a nice young woman.

“What a dreadful position,” he said, “for a young lady like you !”

I did not feel much like a “young lady” after the treatment doled out. In fact, I did not really feel much like anything, least of all like a human being living in the twentieth century. It seemed like a dream. I was enjoying it, but it could not be real.

“You know the penalty ? Death ! A fearful death !” Then the same voice continued to assure me that I need not be frightened. If I told them all, he would see what could be done.

I did not answer. Somewhere in the back of my mind I remembered that “silence is golden.”

Somewhat annoyed, but still in a silky manner, the old gentleman repeated the gist of what he had said.

Silence. . . .

Then his smile became somewhat ferocious. It reminded me of the expression one might see on the face of a man-eating tiger licking its human prey.

After all, those three old men did *not* think me a nice girl at all ! It was my mistake !

One could not plead " Not guilty " to such an enemy, an enemy who cannot fight clean, who cannot recognize the meaning of the simple word, honour. If they meant to shoot me they would. Innocent or guilty, it would not matter which !

To the Turk one might have denied the accusation, to the officials of the Central Powers I made answer :

" You are an intelligent people." He smiled again, and I added, " Find out ! "

Oh, then the fat was in the fire. Smooth masks disappeared as if by magic.

Fur flew—at least it was my fur that was scattered about. . . . What with hunger and fatigue I had been feeling really too tired to be much interested. Now I woke up. . . .

Sometimes wheedling tones were used, but far more often these gentlemen of the Kaiser's Legions shouted and fumed. I was bawled at,

told I knew the penalty and would have to pay it. I had better behave myself (not much use, thought I, if I am to be shot !). . . . If I did not tell them the truth they would *find a way to make me*.

I wanted to say that they were just going the wrong way about it, but instead I just smiled.

There are people who say there is a great deal in a smile, that it soothes the savage tempers of mere man. It doesn't. Those people are quite mistaken, it doesn't, at least it was not very soothing on that particular morning. But I had said all I meant to say. Deny being a spy I would not, say truthfully that I was one, I *could* not. It was really very difficult to keep silent—for one who *likes* to talk.

Finally flesh and blood could stand it no longer.

I spoke as shortly as possible :

“ If the charge of espionage happens to be well founded, and you say it is, gentlemen, it is simply the fortune of war. If I do *not* belong to our Secret Service—and you shoot me, *you will have to answer to England.*”

Then, since such a deviation from the truth was surely permissible, I added—“ and England knows I'm here ! ”

That was all. I was dismissed. They had finished, but—I had not finished. Woman-like I wanted the last word.

“ You are at liberty to shoot me,” I said.  
“ Please don’t hesitate. It will be a pleasure to die for Great Britain ! ”

The sergeant tapped me on the shoulder. The old gentlemen glared, the expressions on their faces were more eloquent than any words.

I bowed.

## CHAPTER XXII

THE result of the whole proceeding was very tame. Speculations as to the reason seem futile. Who can follow the ramifications of a Kultured mind? Perhaps their suspicions had never become definitely shaped. They may have been playing a game of bluff, and argued that a justly accused person would have protested her innocence, or else given way and confessed.

There were, at any rate, a few more formalities in another room, and instead of playing the rôle of heroine in tragedy I was taken to the police station.

"You will find another Englishwoman here," said the guards, as they led me down some stone steps and unlocked the door of a cell.

"By Jove, and I'm glad. Fancy meeting a real living Britisher again!" The idea bucked me up and the men grinned sympathetically.

All sorts and conditions of women were seated on the floor and on the raised dais, which served them for a bed at night. It was a small compartment and the window was boarded up save for a few inches at the top. I looked round for my fellow countrywoman.

"How do you do? I've seen you before." A boyish little figure stood before me clad in dark blue breeches, great military boots and a sweater—nothing else. The voice was the voice of a girl, but the hair was cropped closely to her head.

"Jolly glad to see *you*, but I guess it's the first time in my life," and I *was* glad. It was the first friendly hand—with the exception of the Russian prisoner's—that I had grasped for many a weary month, the first real British accents I had heard for many a long day.

She—for it was a "she"—was perhaps as glad to see me as I was to see her, for the little Canadian lady had *her* tale to tell.

Suddenly I remembered! "You are the girl who wore a kilt!"

Once or twice in the days when Serbia basked in the summer's sun and the war wave receded from her frontier I had met a little dainty lady, a veritable picture with her fair curly hair and Scottish kilt, a mixture of boyishness and womanhood. Now the curls were gone, and the Highland dress had given place to the rough nether garments of a Serbian peasant. The guards were standing at the open door, grinning in appreciation. They expected to enjoy a touching scene in the meeting of two prisoners.

If we had been of Latin descent we might have fallen round each other's necks. As it



was our simple greeting was a disappointment to the audience of women-prisoners and the soldiers, but that grasp of the hand told each of us volumes, the look from honest British eyes meant more than any demonstration.

An official had told me I would be given some food; but none was forthcoming. Save for chocolate the day before I had been more than thirty hours without a single bite. Twelve o'clock came and basins of soup and a hunk of bread were handed in,—to the others—the newcomer was left without. The Canadian insisted on me taking hers—it was their chief meal, but she was one of those rare souls who are big of heart and make good comrades.

I was trying to get some sleep, lying full length on the floor, when the guard appeared again.

“Come,” he said civilly, and he did not give me much time to do it in. I scrambled to my feet. A hasty farewell to my little friend—and the door was shut between us.

To where was he taking me? My police escort would not, or could not, answer the question beyond the fact that we were first of all bound for Semlin.

There were several prisoners, but I was the only woman. One little chap was a Serb of fourteen years or thereabouts. I had been in the same room when he was interrogated at

Government House. His attitude then had taken my fancy.

“Remember you are an Austrian soldier,” I had heard the officer say, looking fiercely at the little lad from beneath a pair of bushy eyebrows.

The child drew himself up proudly and looked the man full in the face. “I am a Serbian and the son of a Serb, that is what I shall remember,” he answered quietly.

He had been shaken and led out. Now we were not allowed to talk, but he still managed to tell me that he was being sent to Vienna to be drafted into an Austrian regiment.

I had seen several similar cases. Young men and lads—boys of thirteen (if well grown) were taken by the enemy for recruits. Sometimes long lines of Serbs were to be seen under armed escort waiting for a train—men and boys who were being deported, taken from their homes and dear ones to be forced to serve against their very brothers.

At Semlin, instead of being taken to the military authorities, I was marched with my comrades in distress to the Civil. There, at the police station, we were kept for hours. I lay on the stone floor. Such habits had become a second nature, once one would have shuddered at the dirt, one would have hesitated before the possibility of rheumatism, sciatica and various other bogeys.

I was marshalled out at last. This time arrangements for quarters were in the hands of my police escort, and he left me at a very disreputable little Gast Haus. Then for the first time I was on parole, left without a guard while the proprietor was made responsible for my appearance in the morning.

## CHAPTER XXIII

THE place was full of German soldiers, shouting, singing, brawling and slaking their thirst with copious draughts of beer. It was a dirty, filthy, third-rate drinking den.

My host was a wizened little man but kindly enough at heart. His wife prepared bread and coffee, which they persisted on my taking in their private room (bedroom and sitting-room combined). An Austrian officer entered.

"This gentleman is a doctor and he begs the honour of an introduction," said the housewife.

"Doctor ——, Fräulein," said the lad, putting out his hand. He sat down and I invited him to coffee.

When I passed through the public room the soldiers raised a shout. "Fräulein!"

Fine sport in view, they thought. One fellow who was tucked in among his fellows on a form against the wall jumped up on to the table and ran its length among the mugs, leaving rivulets of beer overflowing on to the knees of his comrades. Leaping off at the end he dashed towards me, whilst the rowdy crowd of drunken men laughed and cheered. Tally ho!

The hare disappeared just as quick as it could !

It was no easy matter to get to my room across the pitch-dark courtyard with its deep puddles of water, its uneven cobble stones, the unexpected holes and carelessly strewn logs of wood. I was half-way over, feeling my way by that sense which serves instead of sight, when something warned me of danger.

Surely there was someone near ? Was it laboured breathing that I heard or was it pure imagination ?

Yes ! There *was* a stealthy footstep ! Someone was creeping up behind me—of that I felt convinced. It is a horrid feeling, the feeling that something is going to spring out of the darkness—and *at one's back*. At such moments one's muscles become, ulmost unconsciously, braced and taut. It all happened in a flash. I walked on at the same rate but listening with all my ears, ready to catch the faintest sound, prepared for whatever might come, but wishing with all my heart for one little weapon and forgetting the serviceable clasp knife in my tunic pocket.

Then, the next moment, I was in the embrace of a German soldier. A great broad-shouldered, helmeted man was holding me in his arms, kissing me—or, rather, trying to do so, again and again. It was not quite the easy job which he had anticipated !

To call for help was worse than useless. It was the enemy's country. There were only the Kaiser's men within hail. If I could not manage one German, how could I manage more? And they would flock, I knew, if once they scented their prey!

We struggled in silence.

The odds were uneven. David and Goliath were not in it. He was about double my size, he was fresh and in splendid condition. Only he was drunk.

Down we came together. I tried hard to bang his head against the stones. Two could play at that game and he was the bigger. . . . Crack went my occiput—and I saw stars. I tried to get my fingers into his eyes—and failed. The devil in me was roused. Had it been possible to blind him I would have revelled in the deed. I *could* scratch, and I did. Nails left long unmanicured were in good condition for such work.

But I was decidedly getting the worst of the fray. How long could I hang out?

Strength began to fail me—would help never come?

Surely there was a shadow? If I did not shout then, I would never be able to do so. The knocks on my head were beginning to make me confused.

“Help!”

“What's the matter?” It was the landlord—the only one person from whom I might look



for succour. He was responsible for my safety to the police.

He was a little man, but he was no coward. He must have seen that my assailant was not in a condition for argument, for remonstrance. He was drunk, and he was enraged at having met with opposition.

The new arrival threw himself into the mêlée, between us we made the soldier let go.

As we got up—and stood there, panting, a woman came out with a light. We made a pretty picture. The German's face was bleeding, his helmet lay in the mud—I had not scratched and torn in vain! Nor had I come off scathless; my head was aching. . . .

“Ich bin Deutsch!”

To my utter amazement the fellow stood there, with a grin on his face, holding out his hand! Did he think that being a German gave him the right to act in all defiance of moral law?

“German? I should think you are,” I told the rascal. “You could not be a *man*! . . . Shake hands? . . . Not if I know it. . . . *I* am English!” . . .

The landlord took me to my room, a tiny cupboard of a place just big enough to hold a small bed and table. It was built on the ground and the walls were mildewed with damp and heavily stained. It had been inhabited by soldiers, and its late occupants had left it very

recently. The bed was unmade, full of vermin. There was no attempt at cleanliness and the stench of the place was horrible. I tried to open the window, but it was firmly serewed down.

I don't think I could have looked very well. The landlord was frightened. He brought me a glass of rakiya and helped to repair the damages, fussing about with a great deal of talk.

There can come a time when one's condition is such that one's physical sense does not even respond to the horror of vermin. I slept that night in the filthy mattress, not caring a jot, breathing in a poisonous, fetid atmosphere, utterly indifferent to all which might come to pass.



~~Custipical~~

Мма Д. Маттхиса и Маттхиса.  
адресован в 1-й госпиталь на  
резерве в Бухарин и 2-й  
и 3-й госпиталь в резерве госпиталя  
Л. Маттхиса.

Адрес  
в 13.8.15.

Ш. Резерва Војна Ужичка Болница

- Крагојево -

Бр. 14431

УЖИЦЕ

Certificate asked for by Dr. Matthews and given her by the Serbian C.M.O. at Uzitsi, stating that she was paid by the 2nd Reserve Military Hospital. It is in French, and at a critical moment when questioned by the enemy, this document proved of great service.

## CHAPTER XXIV

THE next day I was taken by train to Ujelik. At one station the gendarme allowed me to descend and buy a piece of bread—*white bread*, not very fine in quality but still wheaten bread of a kind—a slice of ham, and we drank each a glass of beer. No meal ever tasted quite so good.

At —— police station I was closely interrogated.

“From whence do you get your money?”

That was a leading question! I often wonder what strange power made me ask Major Popovitch, before the Serbians evacuated Uzitsi, to give me a certificate to the effect that I was paid by the Military Hospital.

He had been rather surprised, for I was, of course, a volunteer, and he rather demurred when I persisted in having the paper stamped. I must have had a premonition that such a document would stand me in good stead! It was just one of those impulses which, if we follow, blindly trusting to a power which we cannot understand, lead us aright.

I laid the paper before the officer.

“I am paid by the Serbians.”

“How much a month?”

I had been clever, but not clever enough. How much ? I hadn't the remotest idea how much the Serbs might have been expected to pay.

I dare not hazard a guess. If wide of the mark it would be damnatory evidence. There was only one card to play.

"By George ! Don't you think they behaved badly ?" I said, taking the Hungarian into my confidence, "I've been in Serbia months and they never paid me a farthing. They said they had not any money at the last."

"Then what did you do for money ?"

That horrid question again ? To say I had my own was as good as acknowledging that I was paid by the British Government, as good as saying I was an agent of the Intelligence Department.

"My brother sent me £30 last September; I brought some out with me. I have had no expenses and it was enough. It lasted me till now."

"Brother's name and address ?"

I gave them and I gave my Bankers and made a few explanations bordering on the truth.

Presently a police officer took me across to the little hotel, and there I was left, being cautioned not to leave the building. I gave my parole. It was no use doing otherwise—what was the good of trying to escape until I knew what was to be the outcome of being whisked about the country ?



During the next few days I lived at that little hostel. It was clean. There was food, real butter, real white bread and sausages—little ones, which are served with grated cheese and eaten in the fingers.

The monotony of passing whole days without occupation, without a book and without a moment's employment is apt to be appalling! It was too cold to remain upstairs and I had no money to pay for a fire. The only alternative was to remain in the large public room—a place which was generally full of soldiers and the town's few remaining civilians.

One evening a nasty little episode occurred. It happened when the room was crowded.

"The English people are pigs!" shouted a German soldier, stopping before me. He repeated the words in English and German, with a bang of the fist on my table.

The fellow's estimation of the English people did not worry me, but all conversation ceased in the room. Everyone's attention was drawn to our corner.

"*The English King is a Pig!*" shouted the man, more loudly, more defiantly.

There was a significant silence. The other men waited breathlessly to see what the prisoner would do. Frequently my uniform had served as a great protection since the German Occupation of the little Slav state. But now, an insult

to our King, and I sitting there in khaki ? Had I been in the most feminine attire I could not have let it pass.

Something had to be done.

Throw some article at the man to stop his filthy words ? Things lay to hand on the table, but in a flash I saw the futility of what would amount to a public-house brawl.

I stood up and looked at the fellow with all the contempt I could muster.

“Are there any *Hungarian gentlemen* present?” I asked, as quietly as I could, and looking up and down the room.

It was a happy thought !

Chairs were pushed aside. Several blue-coated men came forward.

“This man has insulted my King ; will you please put him out ?” my words could be heard all over the room but my voice was not raised.

But now several Germans pressed forward and the Hungarians hung back. They were timorous of interfering.

Things were looking nasty. I could not let the matter drop, even if I wished to do so. The German meant mischief. He was explaining what he would do if only he had the prisoner in his hands—and his gestures were expressive of wringing a human neck.

He began again :

“The —— English King . . .” He got no further.

Of course, it was utterly ridiculous to attempt to fight the man. One blow and I would be sent sprawling. But surely among all those Austrians and Hungarians, surely there would be one who retained an instinct of chivalry sufficient to interfere and prevent a woman from being badly mauled.

Besides it was not possible to let that German speak foul words of His Majesty.

There was no choice.

There was only the one thing to be done. I went up to the fellow. "You coward!" And I slapped him on his mouth.

A Red Cross man pressed forward. In an instant he had grasped the facts of the case, in another he and the exponent of hate were locked in each other's arms, swaying together while we all looked on and wondered, another minute and the fellow was flying through the door.

The Red Cross man was not content with merely doing me this service. He came up with a friend, apologized, shook hands and we sat down together for supper.

"Surely you are not German?" I asked later, surprised at his courtesy and at the feeling which prompted him to range himself on the side of the minority, and that minority a prisoner of war.

He was not. He was a Pole, a Pole obliged to serve in the Army of the Huns.

## CHAPTER XXV

ONE officer—in German uniform—would always come and sit at my table. It was not long before I learnt that he was a Russian Pole.

“I am obliged to serve in the German Army,” he told me, “but I am a Pole and my brother is fighting for Russia. My heart is with the Allies, but my duty keeps me here.”

One day he handed me his case, his glance pointing to a certain cigarette.

“Don’t smoke it,” he whispered, as he turned with a lighted match, “wait till you are upstairs.”

In my room I found a little scrap of paper neatly rolled in the mouthpiece of the cigarette and on it, scribbled in English, “Be careful of every word you say. You are watched. . . .”

“There are several people coming here, sent to get into conversation with you,” he told me next day.

I had already suspected the possibility. Sometimes soldiers, sometimes civilians would come and ask permission to join me at a meal. The conversation would inevitably turn on the war and we would discuss matters apparently



## Kecskemét th. város kenyérfogyasztási igazolványa.

Vendéglőkben, kávéházakban, kávécsarnokokban vagy más étel-  
lek kiszolgáltatásával foglalkozó  
üzletek, üzemekben kenyeret vagy  
egyébb 50% nál több lisztet tar-  
talmazó süteményt csakis ezen  
fogyasztási igazolvány leszakított  
szelvénye ellenében szabad adni s  
csakis oly mennyiséget, mint a  
mennyit a szelvény feltüntet. Ezen  
szelvény csakis a szelvényen fel-  
tüntetett napon érvényes, s szel-  
vényt kenyéradó köteles leszaki-  
tani.

Előre leszakított szelvény érvénytelen.

Fenti helyeken ily szelvény nél-  
kül kenyeret kiadni tilos, aki ezen  
tilalom ellen vét, 2 hónapi elzárás  
és 600 korona pénzbüntetéssel  
büntetendő kihágást követ el.

Érvényes 1916. február 4.

50 gramm kenyér.

Érvényes 1916. február 4.

50 gramm kenyér.

Érvényes 1916. február 4.

50 gramm kenyér.

Érvényes 1916. február 4.

50 gramm kenyér.

Érvényes 1916. február 4.

Előre leszakított szelvény érvénytelen.

E szelvényre kenyeret pék is köteles adni.



amiably enough, but sometimes I found it excessively convenient to parry certain questions by playing Brer Fox.

Bread-tickets were issued in Hungary whilst I was at —— and it was illegal to buy or give bread unless in exchange for the paper. The penalties for infringement of this order were extremely heavy.

On the very day when this Bill was first brought into force my Russian-Polish friend had been kept strenuously at work. At dawn he had had the usual mug of coffee, but the livelong day he had been in the saddle and arrived late in the evening at the little inn, cold and tired both physically and mentally. If he had heard of the new Law he had forgotten it, and certainly the fact that it was to be put into execution that very day had completely escaped his memory. Therefore he had not thought of providing himself with the necessary ticket.

No ticket, no bread.

That night we were served with a soup-like concoction made from the flesh of swine, with a tough slice of pork swimming in the greasy mess. It was winter time and under the conditions of life an enormous supply of fat was not to be despised. But it is possible to have too much of a good thing, and it was really essential to temper the savour of the mess with a plentiful supply of bread.

The "soup" was set before my friend. (There was no choice in the menu there !)

Bread ?

But no ticket, no bread !

Bread was denied him. Not even for a good and frequent customer dare the people of the Gast Haus ignore the Law.

He could take his meal or leave it—and my friend was hungry. One's palate must be inured from birth.

For any palate not inured from birth to the swallowing of "schwein suppe" (*à la guerre*) in Hungary, the practice is a little more than painful unless qualified by cereals.

I handed my bread to the Captain, glad to render even so small a service to one who had on many an occasion showed good-will and kindness to the "spy."

For quarter of an hour we chatted happily enough, always on our guard, always careful that our conversation was such as might be heard by all the world.

Suddenly the proprietor's little son ran up to us, speaking quickly in Hungarian.

My friend flushed and for the moment looked disturbed.

He was a dandy in his way, this Polish-Russian German officer, his uniform fitted to perfection. All etceteras were immaculate.

So that the picture really had a humorous

side when he slipped the slice of bread into his pocket, like a schoolboy detected in the act of eating forbidden fruits.

But the Captain did not look as if he found the situation amusing when he rose and gave a stiff from-the-waist military bow towards a white-haired, much be-laced individual who entered at that moment.

There was no need of my friend's swift whisper, so low as to be scarcely audible.

"My superior officer. Be careful!"

The rest of the meal was both tragic and comic. It was tragic because there, even in that far-off little Hungarian village inn, one felt the hard relentless pressure of the Kaiser's Iron Hand. It was comic in the complete change of tone brought about by the mere entrance of a fiercely moustached corseted individual.

My companion's face underwent a remarkable change. He was no longer a pleasant courteous comrade, now his whole expression reflected the typical German sneer on his "superior officer's" face. Soon he got up with a curt "Guter Nacht" and without the customary salute left the place.

Certainly this Polish Captain was not pro-German in his sympathies! More than once he spoke about the "Invasion of England." The idea is very vivid to the German officers. The Day that our Foe hopes for is still to dawn!

“ England would not believe us, would not believe we meant war, now she will not believe in the Invasion—*but* it will come ! It is no indefinite dream but a settled plan ! ”

The same tale was told me on many occasions. The Invasion of England was spoken about by German, Austrian and Hungarian officers, in different places and at different times, and in almost the same identical words—in Serbia, in Hungary and in Austria.

## CHAPTER XXVI

ONE evening the little Canadian lady arrived whom I had last seen in the police cell at Belgrade. Dressed in a skirt which trailed on the ground and required string and safety pins to hold it round the waist, in a thick warm coat and cap—clothes which she had been allowed to buy in Belgrade, the last state of that little Briton looked worse than the first. Her large military boots looked incongruous with the article which even resembled a skirt. A dainty little person when life ran its usual course, her dearest friends might have hesitated to recognize her in that strange guise.

At five o'clock next morning we started on the journey back to Semlin. The police officer, in whose charge we were, treated us fairly well, he was a kindly asthmatic old man. When we arrived at the Austrian town which lies the river's span from Belgrade, we were hungry, gloriously delightfully hungry, and we put it plainly to our guard that we must eat or lie down and die upon the spot.

He took us to a restaurant, not one of the wretched little public-houses which seemed to be

favoured by the police for my entertainment, but to a very fair place, the best, he said, in Semlin. Certainly I had that day the first decent meal for many months. We neither of us felt inclined for soup, but I remember that roast half of chicken with pleasurable feelings even yet. The tall V-shaped glass of light cool Hungarian wine and the sweet—we could not have done better in England! Oh, the joy of table linen!—Clean and starched at that! There were civilized civilians fellow diners—enemy though they were.

The little Serbian paper-money—two tenderinar notes—which I had managed to bring through had been changed by the police in Belgrade to less than half its value. In Serbia I had found paper-money absolutely valueless since a short while before the Occupation. I never paid a bill with greater pleasure than I paid for lunch that day.

The Danube did not appear to be the river of my youthful dreams! Never did I think, in those long-past years, that the day would ever come which would see me cooped up in the hold of a little river steamer with a hundred soldiers of nations at enmity with Britain.

It was a starlight night, fresh and lovely. It would have been delicious on deck, but there were two of us—and the English are queer kittle cattle, so reasoned our guard. We might jump overboard, we might do a hundred and



one things and so the man said *NO*—and we were marshalled down the ladder rucksacks and all !

Seats ran all round and there were many forms. There was not an inch of space to spare. German and Austrian soldiers lay on the floor, they lay on the tables, they slept on the benches. The place was heated by some apparatus which ran under the seats, making the latter so hot that it was almost impossible to sit.

The smell of scorching, of heat, of so many more or less filthy, unwashed human beings was absolutely overpowering. There was not a port-hole open and the door was shut. Our escort was like a hen with a couple of ducklings. When he saw the soldiers talking to us he manœuvred till we sat behind a table, my young friend between us, and then, since she at least could not be approached, he went to sleep and she followed his example.

In vain I had asked the man to let us go on deck. The atmosphere grew worse and worse, the heat was overpowering, the stench made one's senses reel. My left-hand neighbour, a kindly Austrian soldier, acted the Good Samaritan. He spread both his own coat and mine so that we might sit without being burnt. Then he opened a tiny port-hole right above my head so that by kneeling on the seat I was able at intervals to breathe a whiff of fresh night air. Once or twice

the good fellow pushed a bottle towards me, the inevitable Laeger beer, and begged me take a drink, and I did, glad to do so, out of the bottle turn about, for such comradeship in enemy or friend is not to be despised.

Later on he told me of the town where his wife and children lived. I might be interned, so he thought, in the neighbourhood of his home—and he desired that I should find friends among his people. Unseen by his comrades-in-arms he managed to write down his address and then placed the pellet of paper beneath the coats.

The Germanic atmosphere of dread, dread of the powers that be, reigned even there! Later, as I sat down after one of my periodic breathings at the port-hole, I took the paper unperceived by the keenest eye that watched.

We arrived at Semendria between eleven and twelve o'clock. A little while before we reached the quay we were hustled up on deck. The air was sharp and cold, a very great contrast to the vitiated atmosphere we had breathed throughout the evening. An officer who saw us shiver begged that we should use the first-class cabin, but our gendarme was adamant. We must stand where we were, such was his pleasure, and we did. We expected to land, and waited for more than two hours. Some officials, who had to be seen before we embarked, had gone home, the little

steamer had been long since emptied of her passengers and finally we were ordered to go below.

The place was empty—and had been left in a filthy condition by its previous occupants. The three of us lay down on the beer-stained wooden seats. Previously overpoweringly hot, now that the steam-heating was cut off it grew intensely cold. At intervals I heard our escort stamping about, in the midst of strange tags of dreams. I heard the murmur of my companions' voices. The cold grew more and more intense and sleep under such conditions was beyond the aged asthmatic gendarme.

At sunrise next morning we landed, and, after the usual waiting about, were taken on a steamer bound for Kavivara. There were several horses on deck and the usual complement of troops. The air was fresh and bright. Aurora in all her splendour lit up the earth. The old fort stood out in strong relief and the deep blue waters reflected its battlements in shades of orange and gold, while the star which straggled in the dawn behind its fellows, blinked to see its counterpart mirrored to the cloudless sky. It was the Danube of Youth's Dreams!

At Kavivara we had a three-mile walk from river to village. From the first I protested against being obliged to carry my rucksack. Among Serbian friends on many occasions I had

done so willingly enough, but in England we do not expect a German officer to shoulder *his* luggage and tramp along—then why should the enemy oblige a British woman to do so, a doctor under the protection of the Geneva Red Cross? Our little policeman saw the matter sensibly, but there was neither vehicle nor man in sight. As for the fellow himself he was an old man and far from strong—his big clanging sword seemed quite as much as he could manage.

We had had no breakfast. Our last meal had been the lunch the day before. The road was rough and broken, as roads in that part of the world are apt to be which have seen the passage of artillery and great armies.

Half-way to our destination we fell in with a company of soldiers. Our guard asked permission from the officer in command, and a man willingly enough took my burden. But this was not a matter for official eyes. Once in the village the soldier was dismissed, happy enough with a tip, and we were piloted straight to the *gendarmerie*.

Since we had been told at —— that several British women who had been taken prisoner in Serbia, were interned at Kavivara, the subject of our conversation had been surmises as to *which* unit had preceded us. Would it be a “Farmers,” “Stobbarts,” a “Scottish Women’s” —whose?

As we were being interrogated at the Police Station the door opened and to my great surprise in walked Dr. Alice Hutcheson ! The sound of her cheery, " How are you, Twiggie ? " took my breath away. It was a rare and unexpected pleasure to grasp her hand again !

It seemed like years since I had heard her good old Scottish accents. Only a few months ?

Was it not for a hundred years that I had been held prisoner of war by the legions of the Kaiser ?



## CHAPTER XXVII

My fellow-countrywomen of the S.W.H. had been interned in Hungary for the better part of three long months. They had their tales to tell of hardship and privation under Kultured treatment. With such tales the whole world is now familiar. But the Scottish Unit had, what under such conditions is generally reckoned a great compensation to our sex—they had each other. There were friendly hands and ready sympathy, and a burden shared is only half the weight.

Besides, their captors could not behave to thirty as they behaved to one.

It was their C.M.O. who had the brunt of things to bear, it was she who made all arrangements with officials, who fought for those in her charge and stood between them and many acts of excessive German Hatred.

No woman should go out as a Free Lance unless she is fully accustomed to fighting her battles alone, to suffering in silence, prepared for any emergency. Else let her be one of many and a worker with some Unit.

The cold, the want of sleep, the preceding months of privations, fatigue and rough usage



with a scanty diet, denuded of sugar or fat, had left me a shivering wreck—not ill but simply a parcel of unwarmable bones. Neither the putting on of many garments nor the luxury of a fire could bring the stagnant blood coursing through half-frozen veins.

At Kavivara we prisoners were allowed to go out twice a day with one Hungarian soldier guard.

In the morning it was generally a shopping expedition, in the afternoon a walk. At first I was not equal to either. I only wanted to get warm. There were plenty of kindly friends to do commissions, to bring in sugar, sweets, cheese and eggs.

By rare good fortune a member of that Unit had money—mine—which telegraphed from England just before the Great Finale had failed to reach me.

The Scottish, thirty-four in all, were quartered in two small rooms. They were greatly overcrowded—fifteen in a room, which according to the minimum of Common Lodging House accommodation should have held but seven. Thanks to the representations of the Scottish C.M.O. the authorities were made to see a little reason and I was allowed the privilege of a room outside, in a cottage a few yards from the gendarmerie. It was a quaint little two-roomed place, built on the earth, clean enough but very damp. There I dwelt alone in my glory at the

cost of half a korona a night. My landlady lived at a similar abode a few yards distant.

One cannot travel alone in out-of-the-way places without becoming acquainted with strange room-mates. In Calabria goats and kids, fowls and dogs rambled in and out, in Syria I have seen many strange, poisonous and unpleasant forms of insectivora, but in the Kavivara cottage to open the door was to invite the visit of Mrs. Pig and her babes, to open the window meant an influx of hens, while on the first evening I found the strangest room-mate of all—a brooding hen sitting contentedly enough in a box of hay beneath the oven.

After a few days on a sugar diet the bed of damp maize straw and cobs spelt luxury.

While in Kavivara the bare possibility of perhaps having to drag out a prisoner's existence until that remote date "the end of the war" developed a scatter-brained scheme. I looked at the map. If still interned when summer warmed the earth I would attempt to reach a neutral country! It was well such a plan had not to be attempted! All the same, the mere idea with its thread of hope kept one's spirits cheerful and time passed less heavily, which was employed in practising to speak with an impediment in one's speech in order to cover my ignorance of the niceties of the German language.

Kavivara is a flat little desolate-looking town.

The inhabitants have never recovered from those awful days when many of the Serbian inhabitants, men, women and innocent children, were shot by the invading army under the usual pretext of espionage—they, illiterate, uneducated, contented peasants !

My nearest neighbour was a German woman, her husband was Hungarian. They were kindly simple souls whose hearts had been wrung by the tragedies played beneath their eyes.

They had seen the neighbours, with whom they had lived in friendly intercourse, brutally ill-treated and killed, they had seen Serbian soldiers marched through by their captors, those falling out through fatigue or illness being bayoneted and left, huddled bleeding heaps by the roadside, silent witnesses to Kultured methods of depraved barbarity.

The Hungarian, with his low forehead, high cheek-bones and receding chin, is not a highly developed type, but he is a kindly soul. Above all he is "lustig," he is contented—if left in peace—simple and with no ill-will towards the English. The soldiers are not to be compared to the hard-headed Huns with their splendid physique. The officers lack the cunning intelligence of the German. Kaiser Franz Josef has not held his people in that Iron Grip which has made a nation of soldier-machines, hardened brutes, in place of men.

Frequently my neighbours brought cakes of their own baking—and it was war time, prices were high, they had many little mouths to fill !

Twice my lamp was filled under such conditions that to offer money would have been to hurt a poor but friendly enemy.

Before we left the town my water-bottle was filled with the good light native wine, and not a penny would the woman take—and she was a total stranger !

It was a new experience to travel with a number, one of many. The days of real privation were a thing of the past.

We arrived at Keskemet late one evening and at the station the C.M.O. of the S.W.H. and the Captain of the Gendarmerie counted us over.

There was one missing !

We were hurriedly drawn up in lines. Counted and recounted. Those who made the reckoning began to get flustered until the little British “Chief” thought of adding in herself.

Then we were marshalled two and two, carrying extraordinary hand-baggage, each helping the other.

Our quarters were in a most undesirable place. What with troops, wounded and prisoners the harassed Police Superintendent declared the accommodation of the town was stretched to its uttermost and he could not do better.

It is a blot on the character of Hungary that

they should have quartered a party of Red Cross Doctors and Sisters in a hospital for venereal diseases, to sleep on the mattresses, to eat out of the same utensils as the patients, to meet the latter at every turn and corner. These places in that part of the world are not under the rigid discipline of similar institutions under British Law.

The C.M.O. faced matters squarely. She could not and she would not allow the women in her charge to remain in such a place where, setting aside the risks of infection, there were sights unfitting for any decent human being.

Next day our quarters were changed to a different part of the town. We were given two rooms—one a very small one. Although several slept out we were even more overcrowded than at Kavivara. Our beds were sacks of straw—filled by ourselves—on the floor. At seven-fifteen every morning we hastened to a little Gast Haus for our bread and coffee. One small slice of bread, one cup of excellent coffee. On our way we used to pass the recruits drilling: men of fifty and sixty years of age plodding wearily through the exercises. At eleven o'clock we were all obliged to report ourselves at the Police Station. Here we would be kept for two or three hours in a much-heated non-ventilated room where the Hungarian officials worked quite oblivious of the want of oxygen. No list was



ever called and we were never counted, but the memory of slow insidious poisoning will remain with each one of us to our dying day. The officials were always courteous but they liked repetition. They liked to talk two or three at the self-same moment. One translating into German, the other chattering in Hungarian (double quick) would start together, then the latter would fly off at a tangent on his own bat, making voluble explanations in imperfect German.

For the rest of the day we were free—on parole. We were forbidden to speak to other prisoners Russian or Italian—to leave the town, or to enter any side street. It is strange how the desire for country walks, the longing to explore the slums, develops under such conditions !

A midday meal of soup, beans and a small portion of bread and meat, quite good in quality but very small in quantity. In the evening one more slice of bread and a cup of coffee.

At Keskemet we were again obliged to acknowledge our money. As usual the S.W. were made to pay for their food and travelling expenses. We had no idea for how long we might be interned.

We were not allowed to communicate with a neutral Consul. Money would not last for ever. Besides, I was determined not to be detained later than the summer. It is demoralizing to be



a prisoner of war. Are we to obey the dictates of our Government, and *not* trade with the enemy ? or are we meekly to tell the truth and obey the latter's orders ?

I elected to be a Pauper and hid my money safely.

Now, the Paupers were christened "the Oddments" by Dr. Hutcheson, but we were *Paupers* and all vastly proud of our title. There was a doctor and orderly from Stobbarts, a doctor from the wounded Allies, the Canadian Free Lance and myself. We had no expenses—*officially*. Generally we were given the same food as the Scottish. No doubt had we all been unable to pay we would have fared more roughly—on soldier's rations. If we were travelling the officials allowed the poor Oddments two koronas a day for food. Our names were called out and one by one we walked up to the table and received the munificent sum. It savoured of charity, and one's sensations were not of the pleasantest !

The Pauper Legion had really quite a good time. Only the absolute uncertainty of ever breathing British air spoilt the pleasure of our days.

Keskemet is a clean pretty little town. The Anglo-Indian doctor, the Orderly and I were generally to be found in a certain café—making up for past starvation. We simply had to trust

to a kindly providence that nothing might strike the officials (should evil chance lead them across our path at such hours) as being peculiar in the *apparent* state of our exchequers and the financial requirements of our appetites ! I assure you as far as "luxury" went the Paupers did themselves well. The Public Baths were well supported by nearly all of us. There, for a korona, one could live in the seventh heaven, in the delight of a marble tank, full to the brim of hot water, with the soap and warm towels required.

We remained at Keskemet for five days. Then came the order to move. The night was passed in crowded railway carriages : some of us slept on the floor and in the corridors, we had food or we hadn't, but everyone made the best of things. We were on our way to Vienna—and it was one step nearer home.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

WE spent the greater part of a day in the waiting-rooms at the railway station, Buda-Pesth. On arrival at Vienna the following day our Passports were compared with the originals. There was some little difficulty in persuading the man that the photograph in mine was intended for the owner.

Of all European capitals the Austrian is far the most wonderful. Every step discloses beautiful statuary, magnificent buildings and fine open parks.

During our short stay we were under the wing of the American Minister. The S.W. were quartered at various hotels, at their own expense, but we Oddments were sent to one hotel, a comfortable first-class place. Here our expenses were defrayed by the United States Embassy. If we would we could not have exchanged Serbian paper money and, besides, *we were still in the enemy's country!*

Oh the glory of a real bath in a real well-appointed room! The comfort of fine linen, of springy mattresses! I meant to enjoy the

forgotten *feeling* of a bed, but scarcely touched the pillow before I fell asleep.

It is worth while having a rough time in order to feel the pleasure of luxury.

Food prices reigned high. A portion of horse flesh at a restaurant in the Ringstrasse cost five koronas. Sausage was seven koronas a kilo.

Except for the enormous price of food, the divisions in the parks marked off for the wounded and the number of Red Cross buildings, it was hard to realize it was the city of a nation at war. It is commonplace to speak of the well-dressed women, but two facts will always stand out when one's thoughts pass back to those days. First the wondrous beauty of the city itself and secondly the extraordinarily smart, well-tailored women — rich, middle-class and poor, short-skirted, neatly shod.

Under the Stars and Stripes we learnt for the first time that we were on our way back to Great Britain !

It seemed too good to be true but finally we found ourselves in the train for Switzerland.

In the last Austrian town, on the frontier of Switzerland, all our baggage was carefully searched, then two at a time we entered a room and were personally searched by a woman. Every scrap of paper, all diaries, all photos and films were taken away.

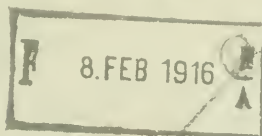
At Keskemet our Passports had been taken,

OBSERVATIONS.

THIS PASSPORT IS NOT VALID FOR  
THE ZONE OF THE ARMIES.

CE PASSEPORT N'EST PAS VALABLE  
POUR LA ZONE DES ARMÉES.

26  
Consul General  
Consul  
Relais  
Wien 7. Feb 16  
Der Sch...  
J. A. Der Consul General in Wien



Endorsement on passport by Swiss Consul in Vienna.





and now they were given back, but some documents which had been demanded at Kesketmet were not returned with mine. They related to my work in Serbia, the Red Cross Certificate, etc. In vain I protested. The officials were rude and denied ever having had them.

When all the prisoners had been passed through I sought these officers. They were smoking and chatting in an upper room. When I entered I was greeted with the words (in English):

“Get out.”

I shut the door and stood my ground. I had come for my papers and I would not go without them. They were the men who had officiated at the searching of prisoners' baggage.

A middle-aged officer shook his fist in my face. He was an Austrian and wore many decorations. He hated the English, once he had liked us—he had spent twenty years in England. Now he *hated* us—and *I had better get out*.

He bristled with rage like a child and I laughed.

“Now you are cheeky!” he cried.

I told him *he* was rude, and that we had thought in England once that officers of Franz Josef's Army were gentlemen by birth and education.

Finally my papers were found—rolled up and labelled and thrown away in one of the large crates bearing the *débris* of torn diaries and every

conceivable kind of paper taken from the Scottish.

It was one for England ! I told them we managed our affairs in a more business-like way. After a little while we grew more friendly. Left to himself the man had felt none of that unreasonable passionate hatred. He had learnt to see us through the spectacles of Germany.

Very late that night we arrived at Brueks—we were free ! No longer to be whistled to heel by some impertinent guard, like so many dogs. No longer to be ordered here and there, no longer to be starved or fed at the caprice of an enemy. It had become part of one's life to be at the orders of police or soldiers. Once in London would I forget and at the sight of a " Bobby " fall in line behind and wait until he moved me on ?

Alas ! Later I was to learn that to be in a neutral country is not to be wholly free from the ramifications of the Kaiser's policy.

## CHAPTER XXIX

WE arrived at Zurich a much bedraggled company.

The Scottish had barely time to catch their connection : a hasty "Farewell" and they proceeded on their way—to England, Home and Beauty.

But "Mac" and I were "Paupers"—paupers in truth and in deed!—What remained of our money (in ten and hundred dinar notes) was and is until this day, absolutely valueless. We remained behind to be financed at the British Consulate.

Another "Oddment"—the "Rev. Orderly"—had not come through unscathed and he remained behind unwilling to face the rigours of an English climate when Lugano and friends were to hand. He had been travelling as a *Kriegsgefangener*, with a temperature intermittently running higher and higher, temples throbbing and, every few days, being seized with rigor after rigor.

Whilst in the enemy's country our six-foot bit of "Oddment" had caused us some perturbation, especially when officials began to talk about a

“clean bill of health” and, as they did from time to time, make remarks bearing on individual medical inspection. Not only in this sufferer from intermittent fever but in more than one other of the party flaws might have been found in the physical condition which could have been used, if known to officialdom, as an excuse to lay hold of us all and place us in durance vile—in quarantine—if so desired, for an indefinite time.

Until we were actually over the Frontier we dared not be absolutely sure of crossing the border. At any moment our hopes might have been dashed to the ground by some chance mishap! . . .

“Business is better done with the inner man refreshed,” I cried plaintively to the Orderly.

He agreed, and we made a solemn compact that our visit to the Consulate should wait, that the first thing duty demanded we should do in Zurich, was to dine—and dine right well.

As we left the station a policeman crossed the road. We clutched each other’s hands—*where was our escort?* It had always been a nuisance not to lose the men, to do so would have meant troubles innumerable. We looked wildly round—then laughed!

Police and guards were things of the past! So thought we in our simple British minds.

It was Switzerland—the Neutral Land, the Land of Freedom and of Cleanliness and Food!

Now, we three Paupers shared a certain piece of luggage which we had managed to leave reclining peacefully on the platform at Vienna.

That "valise" had sometimes caused us right merry laughter.

Now, I am a good packer (in my own estimation, let it be noted), but at Kesketmet I had hedged from doing my share of the labour.

"Mac" revelled in it. To see her pushing and struggling with washing-basins, jugs, tea-cups and rugs, to see her with pillow-slips full of her own underwear—it was a treat not to be forgotten.

They were articles lent, given, or bought, for we both had arrived, one after the other, at Kavivara with no impedimenta.

"Mac" pulled here, she pulled there. She entangled herself in a sheet in her vain attempt to pack our common goods in an orthodox tidy manner. Higher and higher grew certain protuberances, while the bulging of articles betokened a speedy dissolution.

How could I help when my attention was *apparently* engrossed in other work?

The "Floor Sweeper," a V.A.D. of the S.W.H., was a woman who under no condition would allow me to go about with a button unbuttoned, nor with my collar dancing round to one ear, nor did she allow my tie to be tied the way it loved to tie itself.



That V.A.D. looked in. She gasped. She came to the rescue ! . . .

We were not many days at Zurich before we received a message from the British Consul-General.

Our luggage had arrived.

The Orderly had left for the Italian Canton, so with some perturbation "Mac" and I went alone to face the ordeal. We encouraged each other on the way. We laughed and we chatted, but every now and then our eyes met and a little of half-comical horror was signalled one to the other.

It seemed a very nice message "Luggage has arrived," but much, much rather would we have preferred to hear that the Boches had captured the lot.

"It *has* come !"

Mr. Abbott made the assertion in a very positive manner. "*We* won't mind if you have it taken away !" he continued, with his friendly kindly smile.

"It is certainly the most extraordinary luggage the office has ever seen," added Sir Cecil Hertsley.

And it was ! It stood there in its nakedness. It was what it was, it pretended to be nothing else than—a washerwoman's clothes-basket, one of those large things with a handle each side and without a cover. It was bulging, full to over-



flowing, its contents tied in with a much bedraggled sheet.

Without seeing that ridiculous basket one knew of its presence immediately on entering the Consulate! The Austrian officials had been particularly keen on the use of disinfectants, and a very strong and varied, if not fragrant, odour permeated all the place. It seemed as if the antiseptics had been specially chosen for their capacity of diffusing pungent, clinging, most unpleasant smells.

One day I missed a note-book which I had bought in the Austrian capital. It was on the table in my room at 8.30 a.m., but it was not there after breakfast.

Mac and I looked everywhere, enquired everywhere. I did not quite like the idea of it falling into Swiss pro-German hands. In the evening it lay on my table.

Not only was it impossible that we could have overlooked the little volume but there were other indications, too, that a visitor had, during our absence, been interested in my few belongings.

Dr. "Mac" proceeded on her way to England, but I remained attached to the good food and the victim of a wretched cold.

Sir Cecil Hertsley warned me that there might arise some difficulty owing to my dress.

It is impossible to look back at those days without desiring to acknowledge the great kind-

ness I received at the British Consulate-General. The warm hearty welcome came like something, beyond all things, good.

Mr. Abbott telephoned to Berne and ascertained from head-quarters that in all probability I was at liberty to wear my khaki suit.

The question was a curious one. No soldier of a belligerent country was allowed to cross the frontier—in uniform. But I was a woman, it was not the uniform of our Army and I was not a fighting man.

The clothes attracted some attention but they made me many friends.

A young lady seeing me in a café came with a bouquet of flowers which she presented with a few well-chosen words of welcome.

Passing me in the street one day two young men, baring their heads, called out, “Vive l’Angleterre ! Bravo, England !”

On entering a shop to make a small purchase on the first day of arrival the proprietress asked me if I had come from Serbia.

When she heard that I had been some months prisoner of war she cried, “Come in, come in. Poor Fräulein, you must be starved. Come in and eat !” It was pure genuine kindness, mixed with pity for one who she naturally divined must have borne many hardships.

Now an English lady lived in Bolley Strasse, who, when she saw the khaki, felt a little home-

sick. She soon learnt my address by the simple expedient of following me to my hotel.

Next day I was surprised to receive a visit from this lady and her husband—an Italian. It is rarely indeed that one meets with such spontaneous kindness, such generous hospitality as these friendly strangers showered on me. Signor Genesi was full of sympathy for us, typical of the bond which binds Italian heart to British. As for Mrs. Genesi? Was she not English, a British woman exiled, with her big heart yearning for her country in its danger? They made me welcome at their home, it seemed as if they could not do too much, and later, when danger loomed, they stood by me facing possible trouble with an unswerving loyalty.

Several times men staying at the hotel came up and spoke to me. The conversation seemed always to head for the war, the talk drifted to Salonica, questions were wedged in, concerning my knowledge (?) of the disposition of our troops.

It might be merely a coincidence and I thought that my suspicions were probably ill-founded, yet it was possible that the Swiss or German Intelligence people were at work. I lay low. If foreign agents were at work they must have thought me an easy prey, for to all appearances I remained unconscious of the network drawing round. The pigeon looked ready for plucking.

One day as Signor Genesi and his wife were chatting with me in the lounge, a man came up claiming to be Serb. He had "recognized the soldier's cap" I wore. He said he had been with Lady Paget's Unit and he told a story of having trekked to Scutari with several British. His excuse for speaking was to learn the whereabouts and of the welfare of certain of these people.

He stood facing my friends but almost at my back. Owing to his position I could not see him clearly, but voices give a great indication to character.

Might he call on the morrow?

"Oh, yes, at eleven o'clock."

Immediately I began to make my plans.

Now we all three mistrusted this stranger, we did not like his manner and we did not like his voice.

A Serbian lady whom I knew, a Miss Yovannovitch, perhaps never quite understood my reasons for appearing with such a companion on the morrow—but in a few minutes she had done what I could not have done. She suddenly changed from English and spoke in her native Serbian, forcing a reply by asking a question. His speech betrayed him, there was far too much German-Jew in his Slav reply!

I left the building with him, pleasant and friendly, playing up to my part of Brer Fox, fully



Territorialkommando V.

Das Territorialkommando V erklärt hiedurch, dass gegen den Aufenthalt von einer Woche in Zürich der

Frau wwe C a r o l i n e M a t h e w s

Mitglied des serbischen Roten-Kreuzes.

Aerztin, von Liverpool, geb. 1871,  
englische Staatsbürgerin,

die Mangels anderer Kleidungsstücke die Uniform der serbischen Rotkreuz-Kolonne trägt, militärischerseits keine Einwendungen erhoben werden.

Zürich, den 17. Februar 1916.

Territorialkommando V

*Perth 24 Jan*

This certificate, issued by the Military Commander at Zurich, permits Dr. Matthews to remain in the town, wearing her uniform for one week.



aware that he holds the ace who knows the other man's cards, unknown to the player himself.

A few days later Mrs. Genesi had a curious tale to relate. During their absence from their flat a man with a plausible tale to their servant (herself a German) gained entrance to their drawing-room.

One day the hall porter at Hotel St. Gothard informed me curtly that I had been ordered to appear at the Stadt Haus. There was no explanation and the man's manner was extremely rude.

If I were wanted by the officials it seemed to me that they would have sent a proper intimation. I certainly determined not to obey orders sent through such a channel and so worded.

Of course it was a question arising with regard to my uniform—of that I felt convinced.

I went straight to the Military Commander and explained the situation. I had the clothes in which I stood. I had no others and I was not a soldier. He was a friendly individual and interested in the experiences of a woman who had been prisoner of war alone in the hands of the Central Powers. I came out of his Bureau with the desired certificate giving me permission to wear the dress I had worn in Serbia for the duration of one week (the length of time I expected to remain in Zurich), after which I should, if required, be obliged to renew the permit.

The following day the porter came to me again :

“ Why have you not gone ? . . . the gentleman was here again, and if you do not obey the order you will be taken. . . .” The servant’s manner was absolutely insolent.

My Italian friend tackled the man and learnt that the message had come from the Stadt Doctor.

I took the advice of our Consul, and the next morning appeared at the Bureau.

The doctor waved aside my response to his judicial enquiry as to my physical condition.

I had come from Serbia, from a land of typhus and cholera. I had certain symptoms—for cold and starvation necessarily do affect the health. These “ symptoms ” were known to the medical man, and this fact made me realize matters swiftly.

Although the prescriptions of two or three supplies of bismuth had probably passed into his hands, yet he could not have been aware of certain things unless my room in the hotel had been watched day and night.

My Swiss colleague talked learnedly of infection. Well, it was late in the day ! I had not been near any infected person, to my knowledge, since leaving Serbia.

As far as the question of uniform went I had a friend in Sir Cecil Hertsley, and, besides, I had

permission of the Military Authorities. Isolation would be a very different question.

That very afternoon I received a telegram from Lugano.

The "Rev. Orderly"—had met with an accident. His friends desired the advice of an English doctor.

This message came like a godsend. My Bolley Strasse friends and I discussed the situation and we laid our plans.

We determined to baffle whoever it might be who was taking an unwholesome interest in my affairs. The rest of the day I spent with my friends. Impossible for anyone to know of our arrangements.

A train started for Lugano about eleven o'clock at night.

Mrs. Genesi and I only arrived on the platform a few moments before it was due to start. Signor Genesi arrived a minute later with my rucksack.

I reached the beautiful lake-side city about four o'clock in the morning and, since I no longer cared to be a beast of burden, I hailed a *facchino* to carry my baggage.

It was almost as bright as day, through the clear fresh atmosphere the stars shone as if they had doubled their own size.

The road was deserted and our footsteps echoed on the hard frosted ground. Soon I

became aware that someone was following behind. We walked quickly—the unseen hastened after us. We slowed down, and so did the other. Evidently the intention of the fellow was to keep a certain distance in the rear. It was a lonely road at night and I could not think that the man took any real interest in us. Nevertheless, to make sure, I suddenly stopped, took out a cigarette and spent a few moments with the lighting.

Our follower had only two courses open—to stop or to pass us. He chose the latter and as he came up I took one good look at him, taking care that no light fell upon my face.

A young man with fair short hair, pince-nez and soft black felt cap.

He passed by without a glance in my direction.

Now we had him in front and I wondered how he would play his part.

But the *facchino* voiced it as his opinion that the man was a mere belated traveller like ourselves.

The fellow was slowing down. We forged ahead.

We passed him.

The whole thing was so obviously done, it was so apparent that he wished to keep us in view and not to be the leader that I was inclined to share the opinion of my Italian-Swiss. A secret-service man whether Swiss or enemy would

surely have managed something less apparent. Or had I the appearance of a very gullible fool?

Then we came to a place where two roads met.

Our way was to the right.

I listened.

Yes, the footsteps behind turned unhesitatingly to the left!

To say I felt annoyed with myself is to put it mildly. Surely the *facchino* was right and all my surmises purely imaginary. Had my nerves been tricked into conjuring up German tricks where none existed? . . . We came to the hotel and passed along the drive which led a few yards from the door. We stood on the steps ringing and ringing: unexpected arrivals at a somewhat early hour.

Suddenly my companion turned to me.

"You are right, Signorina! That man is up to no good." The porter's voice was low and tense, he clutched my arm and I looked towards the place his eyes directed.

The road and the gate were clearly visible from where we were, and there at the gate stood the unmistakable figure of our recent follower.

Next day the mystery was partly explained. The stranger had taken the lower road, we had taken the upper, but they both led to a third, making a triangle, and the gentleman of the pince-nez had evidently walked more swiftly than we, had made the detour and arrived in



time to see us at our destination. My movements were evidently of interest to someone!

A comfortable bed was still a luxury to be appreciated before its qualities were lost during the unconsciousness of sleep. It is no use having a good thing if one is not aware of its existence. And so I revelled in the downy pillows enjoying George Sand's "Indiana."

Fifteen minutes later I heard the noise of a new arrival. Two heavy steps treading lightly passed my door and I could hear the hotel porter's harsh gruff voice lowered and hushed so that the words were not discernible.

Travellers frequently do arrive at hotels during the night. There was nothing remarkable in the incident.

It was a little later when I became aware of someone on my balcony. My metal curtain was drawn down and from my bed I could not see out, but there was no doubt about the fact! Stealthy footsteps had been clearly audible creeping to my window from the right. Then they ceased. Whoever it was they were at my window.

I thought of the fellow we had seen in the road. Well, if it were he, there was no doubt he could see me clearly in the strong electric light. It was no use jumping up; before I could reach the window the marauder would have taken to his heels.



Let him gaze his fill ! There could be nothing interesting in looking at a khaki-clad figure reclining in sensuous comfort with a book in hand !

And the onlooker must have come to the same conclusion, for soon I heard the same steps moving away.

And then I slept the sleep of the just.

Next morning was Sunday and I saw my patient, and told the story to his friends, residents, whose house was but a short distance from the hotel, along the road down which I had come, but further down. Young Mr. Pince-Nez must have passed it as he made the detour, just before he came in view of the object of his interest standing on the hotel steps.

This English lady and her husband were amazed on Monday morning almost at daybreak, before the household were awake, to see a civilian patrolling the street. Still more amazed were they when the man looked in at their gate, and, after a careful scrutiny, quietly entered and walked towards the silent house.

He peeped in at some windows—and then remained for a while at one, out of their sight.

The husband descended, but by that time Mr. Inquisitive was not to be seen. At luncheon they told me of the incident, and one of the party suddenly electrified us all by saying emphatically :

“ It was the man who followed Dr. Matthews. The two descriptions tally exactly. . . . Fair-haired, short, pince-nez and all ! ”

And she was right.

We looked at each other in some consternation. I told them my experiences in Zurich. Who was it ?

Some of us thought it was a police agent (Swiss), others thought it must be a matter of espionage—German in origin.

Whichever it was the matter was becoming a little bit unpleasant. To have an open enemy is one thing, to have one's footsteps dogged, to be continually watched by invisible eyes, is apt, after a while, to try the stoutest nerve.

It is the unseen which one hates. A danger to be openly grappled with holds no power of carrying fear into one's breast, but a hand ready to strike in the dark—from here, no, from there. With this weapon or with that, to-day, nay, to-morrow, no, perhaps this moment or next year—that is what tries one's nerves, to be everlastingly strained, always on the watch, with every faculty strung to its utmost. . . .

“ I've had enough of it,” I said, at last. “ I shall go straight to the police. If they have anything up against me let us fight in the light and learn what it means. . . . If it's not the Swiss, well, I'll put the matter into their hands ! ”

Mrs. G——, was a friend of the Chief of the

Police. In her big-hearted way she offered to accompany me and we started off together.

The officer heard all we had to tell him. His face remained impassive. He used the telephone and then he turned to us.

“I have sent to have that man arrested. Your surmise that Dr. Matthews might be under the vigilance of the police is absolutely incorrect. Neither she nor the Englishman from Serbia (the Orderly) is on the list of suspects. It is not the Swiss police. I hope we shall take the man, but whether we do or not . . .”

And the keen-faced little officer deliberately moved so that he sat towards my companion almost with his back to me.

“I cannot order Dr. Matthews to leave the country. It is not my place to advise her to do so, for Switzerland is neutral and she has the same right as anyone else. . . . She has her certificate for residence in order . . . *but*,” and the musical voice became very emphatic, “those who are on her track are not easily deterred from their purpose. The spies of those countries with which you are at war are not men whom one would choose to fight . . . their ingenuity . . . their intricate machinery . . . their tenacity . . .”

His voice trailed off, his words became almost too low to catch. Then he squared his shoulders and looked at my friend.

“Officially we cannot send the lady out of harm. We can and we will do all in our power to guard her . . . but, if you want her to reach her home in safety . . . YOU will advise her to leave the country, AT ONCE.”

All this was said in French, and very pointedly said to Mrs. G——, but it was said so that I might hear and for my benefit. Then he turned to me.

“If you decide to stay I am afraid you must not appear in uniform.”

I showed him my permit from the Military Commander at Zurich. I reminded him that Mr. R—— was also clad in khaki.

In fact, on the Orderly's arrival in Lugano, there had been quite a little fuss. Was it uniform or not? Like my own it was khaki, but all that is khaki is not necessarily the uniform of any army.

This Swiss officer had himself seen Mr. R—— in the street and, unknown to the latter, had followed him a little way, taking in each detail of the costume. The final conclusion arrived at by the Swiss official was that the suit, in spite of the Red Cross badges on the sleeves, was not to be considered as coming under the term “uniform.”

But the hat?

It was one such as the khaki-clad women of the Volunteer Corps wear, with the ghost of a

faint relationship, in appearance, to the head-gear of the Anzacs.

"That hat is military—if worn with the chin-strap!" said the Police. And the ultimate dictum was that the strap must not be worn!

Often enough there is *multum in parvo*!

My long riding-coat and breeches came under a different category. I had been given a permit in Zurich, but what is done in Zurich does not cover what may be done in another city, in another canton.

The six-foot Orderly was not a soldier, but I, a woman, was definitely reckoned as such!

It all had a humorous side, but I had other fishes to cook than to waste words about my only garments.

"When does the next train depart for Lausanne?"

The officer looked at me with approval.

There was one in about an hour. But . . . Lausanne? Far, far better, he thought, if I made my way direct to London.

But I wished to see an Englishman on business in Lausanne, and now that I knew with what I had to deal I certainly was not going to allow my enemies to deter me from my purpose.

What was their object?

It might have been to deter me from reaching London for some little time. The Stadt Doctor incident in Zurich certainly pointed to some-



thing of the sort. It is possible that some pro-German had called official attention to the fact of my indisposition.

At any rate, whilst within Swiss territory I had better take off my decorations, this was the last advice of the police officer as he wished me good luck.

“Third Class for Lausanne, please.”

There seemed to be no stranger about as I took my ticket at Lugano station. I was surprised at the smallness of the fare.

I had asked for a ticket to Lausanne, meaning to change trains at Luzern and Berne. At the latter place I knew I might have a few hours to spend—but they would pass, I could stay in the waiting-room. At any rate it was essential that I should get my business done and make headway for England.

I was in the train before I noticed the device upon the little bit of pasteboard.

“Luzern!” *not* Lausanne! The fault was my own! My German pronunciation had evidently not been equal to the demand.

I went to the guard, explained matters and asked for a pass so that I might proceed to my destination and have no trouble, after changing trains, in paying the difference on board.

At the third stop after leaving Lugano two men entered the compartment.

I congratulated myself on having thrown off



any possible inquisitor. The two new-comers sat opposite, one short, stout, jovial, a tradesman to all appearances, the other a tall, sparse old man, a nearly threadbare coat, clean white hands, an intellectual face—he looked a student, a man who on the wrong side of fifty had fallen on evil days. I took him to be a schoolmaster or perhaps a writer of cheap literature. They were typical third-class passengers such as one would meet on any suburban train.

“ Would I mind having the window half-way closed ? ”

With such a question one of the men broke the ice, then, of course, it was natural enough to remark on my nationality with kindly words about the part we play in the war.

I spoke excellent German, so they were pleased to say. And did I know any other language ?

It was the fat man who asked. Experience had taught me to beware of any question, in fact the more innocent in appearance the greater the need for circumspection.

It was certainly no one's business but my own, and, so with apparent veracity and absolute untruthfulness, I replied :

“ I only speak English and a little German.”

Presently we settled down. I curled up in my corner with a book. Above the noise of the train I could hear scraps of conversation.

I felt drowsy, the low-voiced conversation of my fellow-travellers and the noise of the train were acting like a lullaby. Suddenly I caught the words :

“ Zurich . . . uniform . . . ”

And they were in Italian !

I pricked my ears, but could only catch an odd word here and there. Then I took myself to task ! Why should I suspect everyone and everything. It was a most unlikely thing that these men were German agents. Besides, surely I need not consider myself of sufficient importance to be followed about with such tenacity. . . . The train slowed down. . . . The fat man descended at a station and the older, hungry-looking man and I were left together.

Presently we were talking. The man was well-read and discussed some scientific problems with the knowledge of no mere novice.

This led to chatter about aeroplanes and then it was an easy jump to our troops at Salonica.

If he wanted information *he had some*—information of the imagination which if Germany wished to sift out would give her quite a little job to do. At the same time the other man might have been speaking his native tongue, and the trend of our conversation might be purely accidental. . . .

I might as well ascertain the truth. . . . Presently I was engrossed with a notebook,

making various grimaces which I fondly hoped might appear to my companion as the product of a brain all activity. . . . Then I yawned, stretched, became quite drowsy and finally curled up in an opposite corner on the same side. Then for a few moments I grew less sleepy, I jotted down some hieroglyphics, gradually grew drowsy again and then suddenly my mouth opened, the pencil slipped from my hand, my head was leaning back, but on my knee, face up, lay the open notebook.

My eyes were shut—but the left was raised just about a hair's breadth.

I could see the man who in my old corner had been *vis-à-vis* gradually change his place.

In another minute he was *vis-à-vis* again. . . . I *felt* his penetrating glance, but I dreaded a flicker of eyelid, so both were tightly closed. When I did risk the tiniest crevice I could just make out that he was leaning forward.

He seemed quite pleased with what he was reading and I felt inwardly pleased too, for there was absolutely no meaning in the paragraph written and if he wished to make out a cipher . . . well, it would take a Euclid to do it. . . . I gave him a good innings and then gave a little snort. Off he scurried to his previous corner and then, gradually and in the most approved of manner, I awoke, yawned and smiled at him sweetly.

Had he also had a little doze? Yes? It passed the time of a long journey nicely, didn't it.

One little incident made me, even with this evidence, somewhat doubtful of my diagnosis.

When the guard entered for tickets my fellow-traveller gave up his—to Luzern—and I mine. By a stroke of good luck the official made no remark about my previous speech with him and, as if guided by some good fairy, I did not bring out my pass for the further journey.

When we arrived at Luzern we both descended.

“To which hotel are you going, Fräulein?” asked my companion, as we walked up the platform.

I looked at him straight, just for a moment.

“I proceed to Lausanne, Herr, I do not remain at Luzern,” and my heart rejoiced at the change of expression which crossed his face. It was the look of a man baffled and not in the sweetest temper—a revealing of the inner man swiftly conquered, leaving the same bland kindly features.

“But your ticket, Fräulein, . . . it is for Luzern!”

So he *had* taken in the fact. It seemed to me he must have known it before we left Lugano, else by what coincidence had he himself booked only just so far?

“I have my pass, Herr,” I added maliciously,

with absolute innocence, "but I must find my train!"

How I rejoiced! I had *done* the fellow! One for Britain! But I began to crow too soon, our foe is resourceful and not easily made to give in.

He took the rucksack out of my hands, was just a pleasant courteous fellow-traveller. He would see me into my train. People were hurriedly taking their places, evidently there was not much time.

The old man put my rucksack on the rack, he fussed over it. . . .

I began to smell a rat.

"You must go, Herr! The train is starting!"

Oh, how polite we were—but it was a hard keen pull of wills. He should be left behind, of that I was determined.

He began to tell me something. It was evidently of extreme importance in his estimation. . . . Firmly I edged him to the door, firmly, politely but determinedly I manœuvred till he was at the steps. . . .

The horn went—the carriages moved.

Apparently the old man realized his mistake.

"I must go, Fräulein, Leben Sie Wohl."

Was he going?

I watched him anxiously.

Poised on the last step he put his foot out—shrank back. The part of timid old age was played to a nicety.



Every second the carriages were gaining impetus.

If anything was to be done, it had to be done at once.

Thought is swift. In a few hours I would be at Berne. The Embassy meant safety. But—what was the game these men had been playing?

I had been warned officially, “If they want to prevent your return to England they will leave no stone unturned.”

The Kaiser’s people are not given to valuing our lives at a premium. Poison, accident—surely they could have managed to lay me *hors de combat* if they had intended.

A sudden deep conviction seized me. Between that hour and the hour the train would arrive at Berne lay danger. This man’s wits pitted against mine, and the German is no mean adept in his art.

I looked round. No one could see me. . . . It all happened as swiftly as a flash of lightning. . . . It was too late—the man was saying. In another moment we would have cleared the platform. In reality there was scarcely time to think, there was certainly no time to weigh the pros and cons—I was on the top step, he was on the lower.

I caught a look of triumph on his face. It maddened me. I gave him a push—an honest



push from the shoulder with all the strength I could.

He was unprepared.

He clutched—he fell.

My heart was in my mouth. I felt faint and sick.

Had I struck hard enough or would he fall beneath the train.

To see his figure disappearing was one of the most horrible sensations of my life.

To fire on a man in hot blood is one thing, but to send a fellow-human to a ghastly death, unless his hand *is* raised in self-defence, is one of the most ghastly episodes in life. There had not been time to calculate the chances. I wanted to land him on the platform—where he ought to have been—but when the deed was done instantly I realized the chances were that he would meet his death.

I pulled myself together, holding to the hand-rail I looked round down the now retreating station.

Thank God !

Two railway officials were helping the old man up. Apparently he was not much the worse for wear. He could stand.

Excited folk had their heads out from the carriage windows, chattering nineteen to the dozen.

As I entered I was hailed by kindly women.

“It was a narrow escape, but the gentleman, your friend, is safe.”

“No wonder the lady looks white. Mein Gott, but it was silly of the old Herr to try and leave a moving train!”

That was my last experience at the hands of the Huns.

From Berne I came direct to England. The proposed visit to Lausanne was never made. By the advice of our Ambassador I stayed long enough to get a new photo for my passport and then made tracks for Paris.

In Vienna the ghastly flash-light picture, taken one day in the Strand when time was of value beyond money, led to some trouble with the police. Certainly it wore little enough resemblance to the original even in the garb of civilization, and, compared with the khaki-clad individual it might have been an utter stranger. Thus it came to pass that my passport bears two pictures. One of the holder, and the other (according to the printed formula) of *his wife*!

## EPILOGUE

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I am at last across the Border ! I need not stop to dwell on the joy of it.

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